



NAVY NEWS

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BACK TO BASICS

**PATROLLING IRAQ'S
OIL TERMINALS**

'CHUTING STARS

SPAG GO DOWN UNDER

BYE, BASRA

**845 HOME
AT LAST**



STANDING atop rocks on the rugged Cornish coast, Chief Petty Officer Aircrewman Andy Padgett of 771 Naval Air Squadron prepares to be winched back aboard a Sea King Mk5 Search and Rescue helicopter during a training mission to prepare the squadron for the anticipated winter storms.

2007 was one of the busiest years yet for the men and women of the RNAS Culdrose-based Ace of Clubs squadron – more than 220 call-outs and 218 lives saved or helped, notably the entire crew of the container ship MSC Napoli, plucked from their stricken vessel in January.

Picture: LA(Phot) Carl Osmond, RNAS Culdrose



GLOBAL REACH



Fleet Focus

THE year 2008 opens rather as 2007 did. **Royal Marines** are locked in mortal combat with the Taleban while the Harriers of the **Naval Strike Wing** again act as the angels on their shoulders (see opposite).

Several hundred miles away in Iraq, the **Naval Transition Team** continues to serve as the inspiration for Iraqi sailors and marines, while sailors from Britain – currently **HMS Argyll** – and Allied nations draw a ring of steel around the oil platforms in the northern Arabian Gulf (see pages 27-29 for the first of a series of features on operations there).

Further south in the Gulf, minehunters **HMS Blyth** and **Ramsey** remain based in Bahrain just over a third of their way through their Aintree deployment having 'raised the game' of mine warfare forces in the region (see page 4).

A Type 42 destroyer prowls around the Falkland Islands (now it's **HMS Nottingham** rather than HMS Edinburgh, see right). Ice ship **HMS Endurance** heads for the Antarctic yet again – except this time her deployment will run for 18 months (see page 6).

It's not all *déjà vu*, however. New destroyer **HMS Diamond** arrives on the scene, launched in Glasgow (see page 8).

Almost new, but not quite, is **HMS Grimsby** which has finally emerged from an 18-month refit following a prang in a fjord (see page 5).

845 NAS at last bade farewell to Basra after 4½ years on-and-off in Iraq. Heading in the opposite direction, however, are personnel of **847 NAS**, beginning another tour of duty in the desert (see pages 30-31).

Also enjoying the sun were the men and women of **HMS Chatham** who could be found off Egypt for Exercise Bright Star (see page 4).

Far colder climes beckoned for minehunter **HMS Middleton** whose seven months with a NATO task force drew to a close in the fjords (see page 35).

Also in Norway were the Flying Tigers (**814 NAS**), who joined NATO's fellow 'big cat' aerial formations in Trondheim for Exercise Arctic Tiger (see page 7).

Helicopters have also been at the heart of recent activities by flagship **HMS Ark Royal** which has been training Lynx and Sea King aircrew off the Iberian Peninsula (see page 5).

Destroyer **HMS Exeter** squeezed through the Corinth Canal (we have the dramatic picture to prove it, see page 24) on her way to exercise with the Turks.

The Black Duke, **HMS Monmouth**, has completed the RN's first 'world tour' since 2000, finally sailing into Plymouth Sound on a glorious December morning. We cast our eyes over her global deployment on pages 12-14.

The rescuers of the **Submarine Parachute Assistance Group** have travelled equally far, heading to western Australia for an international exercise to pluck submariners from stricken boats (see pages 16-17).

Several thousand miles to the west, **HMS Southamton** headed up the African coast bound for Blighty at the end of her eight-month deployment to the South Atlantic (see page 38).

And finally, a thank-you to all those who have served in **HMS Dumbarton Castle**, the venerable guardship of the Falklands which paid off in Portsmouth after a quarter of a century's service (see page 6).

On the Sugar beat

LEAVING the unmistakable sight of Sugar Loaf Mountain behind, **HMS Nottingham** departs Rio bound for the Falklands to begin her winter deployment in earnest.

The Type 42 destroyer is now on station around the South Atlantic islands, where she has taken over from her sister HMS Southamton.

We last found Nottingham in the northern Brazilian port of Fortaleza for November 11 ceremonies.

After pausing to reflect on sacrifices past and present, the sailors headed to two projects helping the city's least fortunate.

A Fortaleza school is now light green inside and out after a paint job courtesy of the Nottingham crew.

And the orphanage Casa

Familia Maria Mae de Teneris – Family home of Mary, Mother of Tenderness – also received a thorough makeover.

On the way down from Fortaleza, the first port of call in Brazil, the ship broke off briefly from maritime security operations to devote time to the Beeb's *Children in Need* appeal.

A 'village fête' (including stocks for the XO and CO to face a battering from their shipmates) raised £500.

More demanding was the Great British Challenge organised by Nottingham's clubz, LPT Kev 'The Baby-faced Assassin' Green, and CPO 'Ronnie' Scott.

So what is a 'great British challenge'?

Well, I'm glad you asked. It involved climbing Ben Nevis (4,410ft on a vertical climbing machine), then a row of Windermere (19,200m – 12 miles) on a rowing machine and finally a run from Portsmouth to the Isle of Wight and back (16 miles, apparently, or 112

laps of the destroyer's upper deck).

All those exertions – amazingly completed in 3h 35m – raised £1,500 for charity... and prompted the organisers to plan an even greater event for 2008 in aid of Comic Relief. Dubbed the European Challenge, we can only assume it involves similar Herculean efforts but with a Continental twist...

Passage from Fortaleza to Rio meant the waters grew progressively warmer, so Nottingham ground to a halt for hands to bathe.

The sailors were poised to leap into the briny when the cry of 'Nobby' echoed around the bridge.

A white-tipped 'Nobby Clark' (shark) had been spotted just 20 yards from the destroyer.

Nobby's presence put the kibosh on any dipping, sadly.

It was a busy trip down for clubz who won the right to skipper the destroyer for a day courtesy of a ship's raffle.

He promptly dished out plenty

of punishments at the captain's table, settled in to the (relatively by Type 42 standards) luxurious surroundings of the CO's cabin, and commanded Nottingham's movements from the bridge.

Fortunately, Cdr Andrew Price was back in charge for the entry to Rio.

And there the sailors' good work for charity continued.

For once it wasn't Casa Jimmy children's home which benefitted from the matelots.

This time it was Task Brazil which was spruced up by the Nottingham sailors; the charity provides a shelter for youngsters who have run away from home and are living on the streets of Rio.

The stop in the party capital of the Americas was relatively brief... but still long enough for trips to see Copacabana and Ipanema beaches, the statue of Christ the Redeemer and Sugar Loaf Mountain.

After a short stay at East Cove military port in the Falklands, the ship began work around the islands, operating with the new permanent presence in the region, HMS Clyde, to safeguard British interests in the South Atlantic.





● Sangin for their supper... Royal Marines of 40 Commando set off on an afternoon patrol around the town of Sangin

'A significant blow to enemy morale'

ROYAL MARINES are at the hub of a month-long offensive to wrest control of a vital Afghan town from the Taliban.

Musa Qaleh in northern Helmand was thought to be in and around the town before the combined offensive by NATO and Afghan Army forces, was unleashed in November.

Upwards of 2,500 Taliban fighters were thought to be in and around the town before the combined offensive by NATO and Afghan Army forces, was unleashed in November.

Key to the first stage of the onslaught was crossing the Musa Qaleh wadi, with Royal Marines at the heart of the operation.

In two deployments to the country, the Royals have rarely moved as far north as the dusty terrain of Musa Qaleh.

Crucial to the two-pronged move on the wadi was a thrust by 40 Commando and their Viking armoured vehicles on the left flank of an advance by the Scots Guards.

The Vikings rumbled forward at dawn, seizing the left bank of a wadi near the town, digging in briefly in trenches from the Soviet war on high ground overlooking the river bed.

As they moved into position the Vikings and commandos advancing on foot came under fire before the Royals brought their guns to bear on the enemy positions and silenced them.

Such are the scars of war in this land that warriors from a previous generation unwittingly helped the men of Bravo Company 40 Commando.

With daylight fading and two crossing points already dismissed as unsuitable, Bravo Company commander Maj Dan Cheeseman found the ideal place to ford.

Combat engineers from 69 Squadron Queen's Gurkha Engineers blasted any obstacles away and the Scots Guards in their Warriors – whose mobility isn't as great as the Viking – thundered across the wadi, secured a bridgehead and opened the way to the town of Musa Qaleh itself.

The fighting continued into December, this time with the Royals and their British Army comrades drawing the bulk of the Taliban forces away from Musa Qaleh, while NATO troops were airlifted to the north of the town by helicopter to capture it.

The attack on Musa Qaleh cost the life of Sgt Lee 'Johnson' of 2nd Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment who spent much of his time in Helmand serving alongside the Royals at Kajaki.

40 Commando's Commanding Officer Lt Col Stuart Birrell said the concerted effort against

Musa Qaleh had dealt the Taliban "a real blow, removing their last urban stronghold."

He continued: "Without 40 Commando, this move north would have been impossible."

"It was tough getting our vehicles into position, but our Vikings are designed for the difficult terrain we encountered. Royal Marines can – and will – operate anywhere in northern Helmand."

"The operation was a significant blow to enemy morale in the area."

The Royals were key to the success at Musa Qaleh, but key to the success of the Allied mission in southern Afghanistan as a whole is air power – provided, in part, by the Sea Kings of 846 NAS and the Harriers of the Naval Strike Wing, both based in Kandahar.

Both units went through extensive training before heading to central Asia, 846 preparing for operations at

high altitudes in Cyprus, the Strike Wing conducting air combat manoeuvres by day and night.

"The training we put in prior to deploying is now paying dividends and the confidence we have in our weapons, our aircraft and our procedures is borne out by the success that our precision strikes are having in the field," said Cdr Kev Seymour, Strike Wing CO.

"Every time I fly I am reminded by looking down at the terrain how difficult it must be for those on the ground."

Conditions at Kandahar are slightly more comfortable than out in the field – there are coffee shops, eateries and sports

facilities.

But it is not long before the airmen are brought back down to earth.

"The reality of the dangers faced by the ground forces is brought home when you witness the ramp ceremonies here at Kandahar," the Strike Wing's Commanding Officer added.

"My initial thought – having not been to Afghanistan before – was how vast the task here was, especially given the rugged terrain. It amazes me that people manage to live successfully in such a landscape."

The Harriers provide round-the-clock support for the Allied mission in southern Afghanistan (they fly in aid not just of British troops but any

Allied troops requiring aerial firepower), which means there is little time for R&R.

"Without doubt the desert is a harsh environment to operate in, but the support we receive from home and the professionalism we possess in providing a 24-hour cover daily keeps us going," said Cdr Seymour.

"There's always time to reflect and if we can make a difference – no matter how small – then my team and the Harrier Force can be justifiably proud of what we are achieving."



● A Viking from the Armoured Support Group Royal Marines is silhouetted at dusk during operations in support of Bravo Company, 40 Commando, near Malmand

Pictures: PO(Phot) Jim Gibson, 40 Commando

HMS Chatham has a twinkle in her eye

THE STARS shone brightly for HMS Chatham as she returned home after a busy autumn programme.

The last act for the Devonport-based Type 22 frigate at the end of a packed 2007 was to head for the land of the pharaohs.

Exercise Bright Star is held in Egyptian waters every two years. This year saw the hosts welcome British, American, Italian, Greek, Pakistani and Turkish ships and submarines, plus French Mirage jets.

The force spent three days in harbour where the various participants showed their kit to other nations before heading out to sea.

The spell alongside permitted some of Chatham's sailors to get ashore for obligatory visits to the Pyramids. Others headed to the Eighth Army's battlefield at El Alamein and the more intrepid made for the Red Sea for some diving.

At sea, Chatham once again led the fight against the underwater threat, while her 815 NAS Lynx was airborne regularly to wage war against 'enemy' surface vessels.

Chatham – including her new mascot Mighty Mouse – sailed initially for Noble Midas, a major war game in the Adriatic involving HM Ships Illustrious, Northumberland and York plus Allied navies.

The frigate was charged with directing the submarine hunt by the Allied forces – particularly ironic as Chatham's CO was invited to join a boat (we can't tell you which one for operational reasons) during the exercise and promptly targeted his own ship through the periscope.

On her way back to Britain, the ship visited Malta – coinciding with the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh's tour to celebrate their diamond wedding anniversary.

"This was a busy and invaluable deployment," said CO Cdr Martin Connell. "We learned a lot and we can take those lessons forward to the future.

"My crew have been magnificent throughout and I'm proud of how they performed. We now all deserve a period at home."

Cup action for Mersey and Kent

FRIGATE HMS Kent and fishery patrol ship HMS Mersey spent a weekend in Cardiff – a weekend which just happened to coincide with a major rugby match.

Indeed, there was a sizeable RN presence at the inaugural Prince William Cup match between Wales and recently-crowned world champions South Africa in Cardiff's Millennium Stadium.

Apart from sailors from the two ships attending the match, the Royal Marines Commando Display Team abseiled from the roof of the stadium in front of thousands of spectators, and the Band of HM Royal Marines provided stirring music.

Sailors could be found dotted around the stadium with collecting buckets on behalf of the Welsh Rugby Union, naval and children's charities before the game.

Before the match, both ships opened their gangways to visitors and the first evening of the visit, Kent hosted an official reception for 120 guests (in the presence of the cup to be contested) while the Royal Marines Band performed Beat Retreat and led a ceremonial sunset aboard Mersey.

For the record, the South Africans lifted the cup, overrunning the Welsh 34-12.



● Time for reflection... HMS Blyth (nearer the camera) and HMS Ramsey pass through the Straits of Hormuz at sunset

BRITISH warships have helped to 'raise the game' of minehunting forces in the Gulf – and the force is about to double in size.

One year into the Task Force Aintree deployment – the commitment of HM Ships Blyth and Ramsey to Bahrain to work with local and international navies – naval leaders and the ship's companies are convinced they are making a difference.

The two Sandown-class ships were dispatched to Bahrain at the tail end of 2006 for an experimental deployment.

That experiment has worked. The duo will shortly be joined by Hunt-class ships Cattistock and Chiddingfold to raise the bar even further.

"This is a region we ought to be practised in operating in – we've fought two wars out here in the past 15 years," Cdre Keith Winstanley, the senior RN officer in the region, says emphatically.

"The British presence here has helped to raise the game of minehunting forces here. Is there a mine threat in the region? Yes – history shows us that."

Indeed, there are still mines out here – some from the 2003 war, some from the 1990-91 conflict and some, perhaps, from earlier clashes.

And there are still 'mine danger areas' where there might be mines, or there might not be, but until there's a concerted sweep, they remain hazardous.

So enter Blyth and Ramsey to bring reassurance and to work with friendly navies in the region.

That latter point's important. Most of the Gulf region fleets are 'small ship navies'. The sight of carriers, huge assault ships, even frigates and destroyers can, perhaps, seem a little intimidating.

But no-one can really be intimidated by a couple of Sandowns. And, besides, the Saudis already operate three of this class of ship.

"Having small ships out here really breaks the ice," says Ramsey's CO Lt Cdr Jon Holmes

(you might remember him from such ships as HMS Bangor and Pembroke among others).

"I've driven 50 per cent of the Sandowns – either because I've not got the hang of it yet, or because I'm quite good at it," he says.

We're guessing it's the latter...

The Americans are certainly impressed.

On a recent minehunting exercise they branded the men of Ramsey 'the silent killers' for their proficiency in finding and destroying underwater weapons.

"We've noticed working with the American mine countermeasure forces that they've upped their game," Ramsey's CO adds.

"It's not usual for ships of our size to be out here for so long. It's a real achievement, and I think it's a massive success story so far. We're only getting better and better."



Tales of the Arabian knights

BASING the Aintree force in Bahrain allows the duo to cast their net around the Gulf region.

For the most part the two ships exercise with American, Saudi and Omani.

However, the ships have also visited Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (notably Dubai) during their protracted stay in the Gulf.

And the pair have ventured beyond these waters, through the Straits of Hormuz and out into the Gulf of Oman.

The Omanis are among Britain's longest-standing allies in the Middle East, hosting Ramsey for six weeks.

And as long-standing allies, they sent an aircraft to blast Ramsey out of the ocean...

A radio-controlled drone was dispatched to simulate a fighter-bomber attack, with the mine countermeasures vessel expected to destroy it.

Beneath the water, Ramsey's mine clearance divers worked side-by-side with their Omani counterparts.

On land, the Omanis acted as all good hosts do, laying on a barbecue... and thrusting the Brits into the cauldron of their damage control school (basically the Omani version of the DRIU and Phoenix firefighting trainer).

Maintaining such a high tempo week in, week out, is challenging, especially in this environment.

So during foreign visits time is set aside for

some R&R. But as it's Jack we're talking about, there's little rest or relaxation... and invariably a lot of sport (roof jousting aside) – with perhaps the odd excursion to a hostelry.

So in Doha, for example, there was football, rugby and cricket, plus a 'hash run' (basically a race following a trail).

And there's always time for the pool – although it's strange at times what you can find in it.

After a four-month break from using CDBA kit (Clearance Divers Breathing Apparatus) Ramsey and Blyth's dive teams decided they needed to brush up on their skills – not least the emergency procedures they last practised at the beginning of the deployment.

They did so in a swimming pool. Not any pool, mind you, but the pool in the official residence of the UK Maritime Component Commander in Bahrain, Cdre Keith Winstanley.

And so on a sunny (there are rarely any other days out here) Saturday in November, the frogmen jumped into the water.

At just two metres deep, the pool was a long way short of the set's maximum operating depth (in excess of 40 metres – 130ft).

The good visibility and benign conditions, however, did mean the divers' drills had to be spot on to meet the demands of their assessing supervisor, PO(D) Dicky Dickson, who had a clear view of all their activities.

Among other duties, ET(WE) Chris Francis is responsible for maintaining Ramsey's 30mm gun... whatever the temperature.

"You can sit out in the sun and look after the gun. It's actually quite a pleasure," he says. "It's better than Faslane."

"In the heat, you change around every half an hour or so and the lads bring water out to you regularly. It's incredibly hot out on deck in the height of summer."

It's not just the sailors who suffer. This heat is not especially good for all that hi-tech kit aboard the two Sandown-class ships.

"The water is as warm as bath water," explains Lt Cdr Holmes. "It's difficult to keep the sonar cool when you are stopped. The sonar really doesn't like working in hot water."

"It's a challenging environment



to work in for these ships. But we have some outstanding engineers who spend all their time making sure everything is in order. People like these are few and far between."

The Aintree ships have been out here for 12 months now. Ramsey is currently crewed by the ship's company of HMS Pembroke. To keep the force out here for three years, the entire Sandown community is being rotated through the two ships.

"Sea swap has been challenging, but a lot of these problems are human-made – people are reluctant to change," says Lt Cdr Holmes.

"I think it's the way of the future. At the end of the day, we're professional people moving from one ship to another."

ET Francis agrees. "Everything was laid on for us. We didn't think it would work 100 per cent, but everything went as planned. There was nothing unexpected, and that's good."

Unlike the larger ships in the Gulf, Ramsey and Blyth only sortie for short spells – up to a week at a time normally – before returning to base in Bahrain.

Alongside or at sea, they still live in cramped confines. There's nowhere really to escape – even less so than on a frigate or destroyer.

There's no gym *per se* aboard Ramsey.

There's a box of weights and a bench on the upper deck, there's a cycling and a rowing machine squeezed into some spare space, and there's a stepper in the hangar. Using that when it's 50°C outside... now that's a workout.

And there are less conventional 'sports' to pass the time. Roof jousting, anyone?

Roof jousting?

"Leap across the ward room with a pen, trying to mark the furthest distance on the ceiling before you come crashing down on the floor," explains navigator Lt Sam Jane.

Somehow knowing Jack, there's a chance it could take off...

Making (radio) waves

HAVING celebrated the varied existence of HMS Illustrious last month, now it's the turn of her sister Ark Royal to enjoy the spice of life.

The tail end of 2007 saw an ever-changing influx of aircrew as the carrier hosted numerous aerial units honing their seaborne skills.

The autumn opened with RAF Chinooks of 27 Sqn and Sea Kings from the Commando Helicopter Force aboard for Grey Heron – amphibious exercises in the Solent and West Country.

Then off Portugal came the Lynx of 702 NAS – the training squadron for front-line Lynx pilots and observers – who conducted a raft of manoeuvres and exercises to earn their wings, allowing them to progress to 815 NAS, the operational Lynx unit.

As Ark returned from the Iberian Peninsula, she hosted BBC Radio 5 Live, who broadcast their breakfast show from the carrier on November 23.

Presenter Nicky Campbell spent a day with the ship's company chatting to them about the routine aboard the flagship, before broadcasting the breakfast show the following morning – including interviews with CO Capt Mike Mansergh and First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Jonathon Band.

After a brief spell alongside in Portsmouth, the ship was back at sea for yet more aviation training.

This time three Sea King Mk4s from 848 NAS – the 'Junglie' equivalent of 702 NAS – flew on to Ark for operational conversion training ahead of front-line service.

To help the aircrews train, they were joined by green berets of 42 Commando – men they may one day carry into battle for real.

The fliers carried out a number of manoeuvres and exercises from amphibious assaults to emergency landings in total darkness.

Ark is now back in Portsmouth on call to respond to any international crisis as she's the flagship of NATO's maritime response force at present.



● *Shades of grey... The flight deck team on HMS Ark Royal prepare the Lynx of HMS Chatham during training serials in the Bay of Biscay*

Picture by LA(Phot) Brett Turner, HMS Ark Royal

Autumn on the Severn seize

THE fishbusters of HMS Severn appropriately closed the log on their 2007 patrols in one of Europe's most famous fishing ports.

The pleasant (if rather chilly) Danish port of Esbjerg was the final visit of the year for the Portsmouth-based fishery protection ship.

The sailors naturally visited the town's fishery museum as well as enjoying more usual run ashore fare – a football match, entertaining the local naval association and sampling the Esbjerg nightlife (the town has a large transient ex-pat community heading to or back from North Sea oil rigs).

Before berthing in Denmark, Severn conducted her last patrol of the year – a patrol which was rather hampered by foul weather.

After riding out the storms for several days off Tyne and Wear, the River-class ship shifted to the eastern English Channel where the weather was somewhat less harsh.

Numerous boardings of trawlers were carried out, including the French ship Jacques II, inspected off Dover.

The boarding team – including a French sea fishery officer – found the crew had recorded caught cod as black sea bream, and had caught five per cent too many cod.

Saint Jacques II was promptly detained and its owners and skipper ordered to pay more than £36,000 in fines and costs by Folkestone Magistrates.

Severn then returned to the North Sea, this time heading towards the extremities of German waters to inspect UK trawlers – inspections limited again thanks to the inclement weather.

From there it was on to Esbjerg before heading for Falmouth and a spell of maintenance, then it was back to Portsmouth for Christmas leave.

Grimsby sheds her cloak

FINALLY back in the water after nearly two years out of action, HMS Grimsby emerges from the shed where she has been overhauled.

The Sandown-class ship was badly damaged when she clipped the side of a Norwegian fjord in 2005.

A couple of years down the line, the Babcock Syncrolift (*I feel I should add a TM here – Ed*) gently nudged Grimsby out of her refit shed.

Rather than just patch the ship up, the Babcock team thoroughly overhauled Grimsby, adding a raft of new kit including mini-guns, WECDIS electronic charts and the new mine disposal system Seafox.

The result is almost a brand-new ship. At the very least, she's one ready to take her place in the front line again relatively shortly.

"We're looking forward to getting back aboard Grimsby and back to sea where the ship will do what she does best," said CO Lt Cdr Adam Parnell.

Harbour and sea trials take place this month before a team from FOST assesses the ship and her sailors; the latter will head out *en masse* to the Middle East as part of the Aintree deployment crewing HMS Ramsey and Blyth.

Picture: Lt Kirk Macrae, HMS Grimsby



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Traffickers snared by Richmond

HMS Richmond crept out of the darkness to pounce on two boats suspected of smuggling Somalis into the Yemen.

In a joint operation with the Yemeni Coastguard, the Portsmouth-based frigate tracked two suspicious dhows during the day.

When darkness fell, Richmond and Yemeni vessels closed on the suspect vessels.

The two dhows were impounded and 13 crew aboard them were arrested on suspicion of smuggling people into the Yemen.

“Monitoring the vessels from afar using the ship’s tracking equipment, we could clearly see some suspicious activity under way,” said Richmond’s CO Cdr Piers Hurrell.

“The message this arrest sends to others involved in this illegal activity is quite clear.”

Figures provided by the United Nations suggest as many as 25,000 Somalis have been transported illegally from their chaotic homeland to the Yemen – although around 1,000 are believed to have died or drowned in the process.

Richmond was working with US, German and Yemeni vessels in the Gulf of Aden as she made her way back home from patrols in the northern Arabian Gulf.

That rather circuitous journey home to Portsmouth took Richmond to the Romanian port of Constanta in the Black Sea.

The ship hosted several senior Romanian naval officers on the ship’s stint safeguarding Iraq’s oil platforms.

Nuts about Sir Galahad

LANDING support ship RFA Sir Galahad has a new name – and new owners.

The ship was formally handed over to the Brazilian Navy at a ceremony in Portsmouth last month. She now goes by the name Garcia D’Avila – after a distinguished 20th-Century Brazilian captain.

Sir Galahad, built as a replacement for her namesake lost in the Falklands, collected the Wilkinson Sword of Peace twice for her humanitarian work, latterly delivering vital aid to Iraq during the 2003 conflict.

Of the Knights of the Round Table, only Sir Bedivere is still in service... just.

She will return to the UK from the Gulf shortly to pay off.



Ace DC’s final bow

THE FINAL act in the life of HMS Dumbarton Castle was played out on a damp Portsmouth morning – aptly ‘Falklands weather’.

The Falklands guardship decommissioned in a ceremony in Portsmouth Naval Base, bringing the curtain down on 25 years’ service.

The ceremony was attended by friends and affiliates from the patrol ship’s past and present, as well as the Band of HM Royal Marines Portsmouth who provided the appropriate musical accompaniment.

Prince Harry, the Commodore Small Ships and Diving, wasn’t able to attend – but he did send the ship’s company a message of encouragement and gratitude.

“Across a variety of roles, Dumbarton Castle has provided outstanding service to the Royal Navy,” he said.

“In particular, I know that she has become a familiar and comforting feature to the Falkland Islanders since first arriving in the South Atlantic 25 years ago.”

Brig Nick Davies, Commander of British Forces in the South Atlantic, was guest of honour at the ceremony, alongside four former commanding officers of the ship, and the provost of West Dumbartonshire Council – one of DC’s affiliates.

All 55 of the final ship’s company lined up on the quayside for the farewell ceremony – particularly poignant for POMEM(M) Benzie who has spent much of his career in the Last Castle, and was rewarded with clasp to his Long Service and Good

Conduct Medal for his dedication.

The ship entered Portsmouth for the final time on November 22, trailing her decommissioning pennant as she did (pictured above by LA(Phot) Luis Holden, FRPU Whale Island).

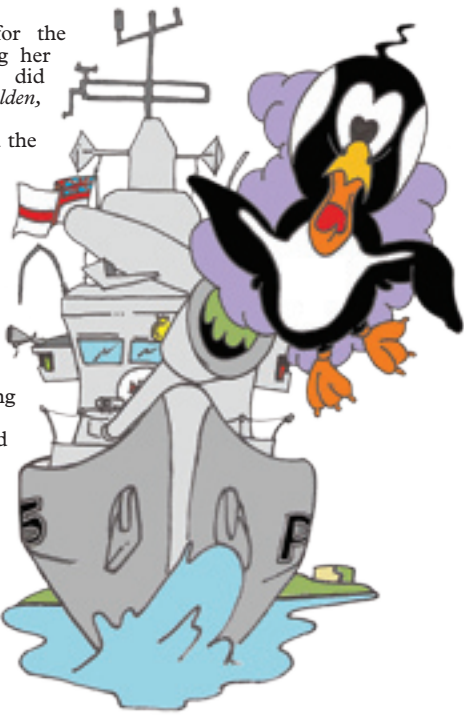
She has handed over duties around the Falklands to HMS Clyde, a brand-new patrol vessel which takes the place of both Dumbarton Castle and her sister Leeds Castle which paid off three years ago.

“It has been a huge honour being the last captain of the Last Castle. Her utility and capability are a credit to those who built her and operate her. She has spent more than half her life in the toughest ocean on earth, the South Atlantic,” said her Commanding Officer, Lt Cdr Ian Lynn.

Lt Cdr Lynn hosted a dinner aboard the ship for 14 of DC’s previous 32 COs, including her first two skippers, to recall Dumbarton Castle’s proud history.

Both DC and her already-retired older sister Leeds Castle are awaiting buyers in Portsmouth Naval Base.

● *If the RSPB are reading – it’s just a cartoon... A sketch drawn by AB(SEA) Helen Sochon for DC’s decommissioning booklet*



Daring’s cost shoots up

TAXPAYERS will have to dip into their pockets for an extra £500m to pay for two of the RN’s vital new projects.

Despite conducting highly-successful sea trials off Scotland in the summer, HMS Daring will not be in service until the tail end of 2010.

The Type 45 destroyer project is already 2½ years behind schedule.

But a report from the National Audit Office now warns Daring will be delayed by a further 11 months for ‘technical factors’.

The delays mean the cost of the Type 45 programme has rocketed by £354m in the past 12 months (despite £30m shaved off the budget by buying fewer missiles for the destroyers and a further £78m saved during the construction process).

The MOD originally set aside £5bn for the destroyers – successors to the ageing Type 42s. The bill for the six ships ordered is now set at £6.46bn.

Delays to Daring also mean one Type 42 will have to be run on for a year longer – costing an extra £2m in upkeep.

The other price hike for the RN comes from the Astute hunter-killer submarine programme.

Originally £2.5bn was set aside for the next-generation attack submarine. The NAO says the Astutes will now cost £3.79bn (up £142m in the past year) as the boats require more materials than originally predicted – and more labour to fit this extra equipment.

On the plus side, the cost of the Joint Strike Fighter/ Joint Combat Aircraft – the replacement for the Harrier – has dropped by £58m. The jets are now expected to cost the taxpayer £1.85bn, down from the original estimated cost of £2.03bn.

Sutherland enters refit

YOU will not see much of HMS Sutherland for the next 12 months... unless you happen to live in Rosyth.

The Devonport-based frigate has entered a year-long refit on the Forth with Babcock Marine.

Besides £17m being spent on a general overhaul of the 11-year-old warship, Sutherland will also receive £18m of new kit.

Among additions to the frigate will be: a modified 4.5in ‘Kryten’ gun, the world’s premier sonar, 2087, and the latest variant of Seawolf anti-air missiles which are better able to deal with 21st-Century threats in the skies.

A true test of Endurance

IF you missed ice ship HMS Endurance slipping past Round Tower at the end of November, you’ll have to wait 18 months to see her again in home waters.

The icebreaker has left Portsmouth on a groundbreaking deployment which will keep her away from home until the spring/summer of 2009.

Endurance will spend two summer seasons in Antarctic

waters, improving charts for fellow mariners – especially relevant given the increase in cruise liner traffic in the area – and conducting scientific research in conjunction with the British Antarctic Survey.

Once the austral winter begins to set in, come our spring, the Red Plum will head for South Africa.

She will spend the summer in African waters visiting countries not normally called upon by RN vessels, let alone an icebreaker.

She will also carry out

maritime security patrols.

During her odyssey, members of her ship’s company will be rotated so that they will not be away from home for more than a few months at a time.

Before thoughts could turn to snow and ice, there’s the small matter of the 8,000-mile journey to contend with. And wouldn’t you know it, the Bay of Biscay was an absolute pig as the ship ploughed into the teeth of a south-westerly gale.

“The ship pitched

and tossed heavily all the time – this took its toll on the less-seasoned members of the ship’s company who were feeling a bit queasy,” said Commanding Officer Capt Bob Tarrant.

When the seas subsided, the ship’s company were able to attend to important matters: the bucketball championships.

Described as a cross between basketball, netball and volleyball, the aim is to score by getting the small ball into a bucket

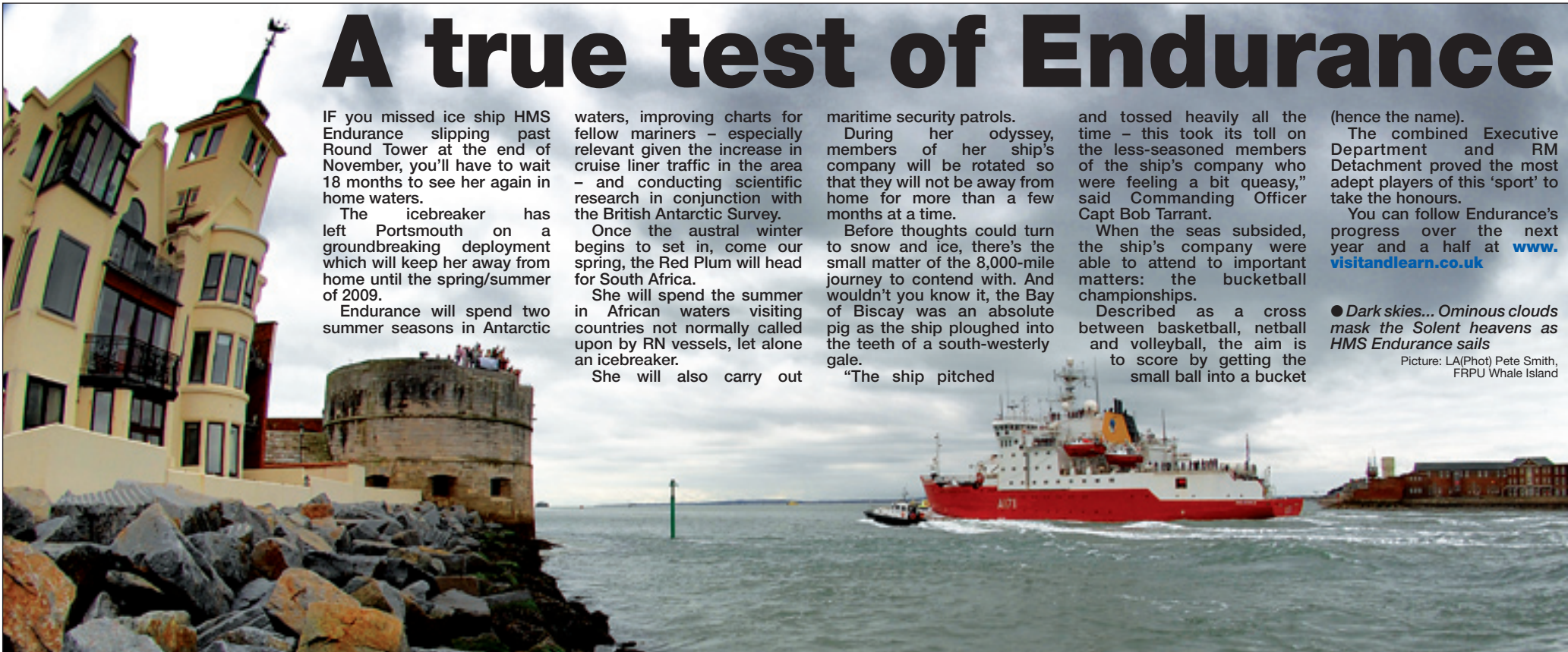
(hence the name).

The combined Executive Department and RM Detachment proved the most adept players of this ‘sport’ to take the honours.

You can follow Endurance’s progress over the next year and a half at www.visitandlearn.co.uk

● *Dark skies... Ominous clouds mask the Solent heavens as HMS Endurance sails*

Picture: LA(Phot) Pete Smith, FRPU Whale Island



● An 814 NAS Merlin basks in the glow of artificial light from a hangar at Ørland air base near Trondheim



Tigers pounce on Arctic roll

HANDS up. Where do you find tigers?

India? Yes, very good.

Nepal? Yes.

Bengal? Yes.

Trondheim? No I don't think you'll find any tigers in Norway.

Ah, how wrong you are.

There were 12 different 'species' of Tigers gathered around Trondheim, including the British one.

The Flying Tigers – the Merlins of 814 Naval Air Squadron – headed to Scandinavia as aerial warfare raged among the fjords.

The Flying Tigers are not unique to the Fleet Air Arm. In fact, pretty much every NATO nation has some aerial unit bearing the name 'tigers'.

Indeed, so many tigerish squadrons are there among the Allied nations that back in 1961, the various formations decided to meet for an exercise.

Since then, the NATO Tigers have gathered sporadically (the last meeting was five years ago), this year converging on Norway for the first time in Exercise Arctic Tiger.

There was an eclectic mix of fixed wing and rotary wing aircraft mustered on Norwegian tarmac: 12 different aircraft from 21 squadrons requiring more than 1,000 aircrew to look after them.

Among others there were Czech Hinds, RAF Pumas, Norwegian, Belgian and Turkish F16s,

Spanish Mirages, Swiss Hornets, Greek Corsairs, French Mirages, Rafales, Super Etendards alongside the Flying Tigers.

From Ørland air base in Trondheim, 814 carried out combat search and rescue missions initially – scouring the Norwegian mountains looking for downed pilots with Czech Hind attack helicopters providing support.

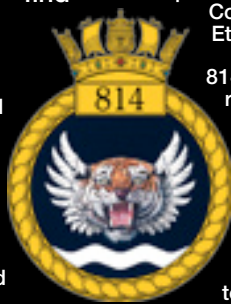
Then it was the Merlins' turn to extract special forces troops parachuted in to the fjords to destroy key enemy targets – missions rarely carried out by a helicopter designed to hunt submarines, not pick up troops on hostile shores.

Not all the activities of 814, motto *in hoc signo vinces* – 'through this sign you will conquer', Emperor Constantine's battle cry – were airborne.

An important strand of Arctic Tiger was bonding with fellow Allied aircrew, including a rather bizarre sports day where the various aircrew dressed as Vikings, tigers, or just wandered around blindfolded trying to complete a relay race.

Next up for the Flying Tigers are the more traditional surroundings of HMS Illustrious as part of the carrier's Orion deployment east of Suez with a force of more than a dozen British, French, American and Spanish warships, plus an escorting submarine.

■ 820 go Dutch, page 10



● Ørland of hope and glory... Merlin 67 of 814 NAS prepares to start up on the Norwegian tarmac



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Sparkle in the gloom

Diamond debut brightens a rainy day on the Clyde



THE new jewel in the Navy's crown made a sparkling debut in the gloom of an autumnal Glasgow day.

Diamond is the third of the Type 45 destroyers to slip into the Clyde

And she and her sisters were hailed by Defence Equipment and Support Minister Baroness Taylor as "the most powerful destroyers ever built for the Royal Navy."

The launch, at BAE Systems' Govan yard, was carried out by Sponsor Suzie Johns, wife of Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral Adrian Johns.

Mrs Johns said that when she received a letter from First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Jonathon Band she "had to read it three times before the meaning sank in."

"In fact, I had to ask the Second Sea Lord to read it out loud just to make sure."

"I realised it was true when I saw the colour drain from Adrian's face as he realised what the name Diamond was going to mean for his bank account."

"Diamonds are certainly *this* girl's best friend!"

Mrs Johns continued: "She is a jewel – beautifully crafted from thousands of tons of raw material to become the flawless gem she is today."

"She shines and sparkles like the Diamond she is, and she reflects so brightly the amazing skill and endeavour of the designers and workforce who have created her."

The launch, watched by shipyard staff and their families as well as more than 3,000 local schoolchildren, was followed by a display by a RN Sea King, and a volley of fireworks.

The first of class, Daring, completed her initial sea trials in the summer, and Dauntless is being fitted out just along the Clyde.

As well as providing cutting-edge air defence, the 7,300-tonne ships can operate a Chinook-sized helicopter from their flight decks and have accommodation for up to 60 Royal Marines and their equipment.

The fourth and fifth of class, Dragon and Defender, are currently in build.

● *Diamond is shepherded along the River Clyde by tugs*

Picture: WO(Phot) Ian Arthur (FRPU North)



● *Diamond was launched by Mrs Suzie Johns (below), wife of Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral Adrian Johns. Mrs Johns also inspected the Guard of Honour (top left), watched by thousands of children given time off school to attend the launch (below left)*

Pictures: PO(Phot) Tam McDonald (FRPU North)



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IT HAS not been the most enjoyable of months in Whitehall which has received a bit of pounding from Fleet Street...

THE Royal Navy would no longer be able to fight a major war because of continuing cuts, according to a leaked report.

Fewer ships, which are older than their counterparts from 20 years ago, are too thinly stretched even to mount a 'medium-scale' operation.

The Ministry of Defence report, drawn up by Rear Admiral Alan Massey, the Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff, states: "The current material state of the Fleet is not good."

"The Royal Navy would be challenged to mount a medium-scale operation against a technologically-capable adversary."

- Plymouth Herald

PRIME Minister Gordon Brown has treated the Armed Forces with 'contempt' and 'disinterest', a former Chief of the Defence Staff told the House of Lords.

Admiral Lord Boyce said the decision to give one person - Des Browne - the jobs of both defence and Scottish secretary was an 'insult' at a time of war.

"It is seen as an insult by our sailors, our soldiers and our airmen on the front line."

"It shows an appalling lack of judgment at a time when our people are being killed and they are being maimed."

Defence Minister Derek Twigg said Mr Browne had "shown absolutely fantastic leadership and is a fantastically hard-working Secretary of State."

- BBC News

A FORMER First Sea Lord has accused the government of 'hollowing out' the Navy through years of cuts and under-funding.

Admiral Sir Julian Oswald said: "The Navy has been so pressed for money that it has been hollowed out."

"Even if they have got the ships, they have not got the back up for them, the ammunition and so forth."

"I think the situation is more serious now than it has been in the past."

- Portsmouth News

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● *Eternal Vigilant... Royal Marines of the Fleet Protection Group shepherd HMS Vigilant out of HM Naval Base Clyde in their heavily-armed ORC Offshore Raiding Craft. Vigilant was leaving Faslane to begin a three-month nuclear deterrence patrol, maintaining the constant watch the Silent Service has carried out since the end of the 1960s.*

Picture: LA(Phot) 'Del' Trotter, FRPU Clyde

Turnin, burnin', whirlin' Merlin

A SIZEABLE Merlin force, led by the whirlybirds of 820 NAS, mustered in home waters for a major exercise with the Dutch.

Two of the most potent assault ships in Europe's navies - HNLMS Rotterdam and the brand-new Johan De Witt - were dispatched to the Channel and Irish Sea by The Hague for Exercise Bright Archer.

For two weeks off the coasts of Cornwall and, subsequently, Pembrokeshire, Bright Archer tested the Anglo-Dutch combination on a mix of

missions - submarine hunting, coping with surface threats, moving troops, evacuating casualties, and ferrying VIPs around - concluding with a combined assault on the Castle Martin ranges in south-west Wales.

The Merlin force - chiefly aircraft from 820 NAS bolstered by sister Merlin squadrons 829 and 700 NAS - was involved during the exercise rehearsal at Predannack airfield (RNAS Culdrose's satellite field), and in the final assault at Castle Martin.

820 NAS trained the Dutch Marines in the art of fast roping from a Merlin - a technique carried out 'for real' towards the end of Bright Archer.

The exercise also gave 820 NAS the opportunity to conduct the first Merlin landing on the previously uncharted territory of the HNLMS Johan De Witt (the Dutch fly the NH90 which is similar to the Merlin).

The visit to the De Witt, in turn, allowed opportunities for Royal Navy crews to work alongside their Dutch counterparts as they increased their knowledge of deck operations with Merlin.

"I am immensely proud of my team and their ability to pick up unusual tasking such as this at short notice and make a success of it," said 820's Commanding Officer, Cdr Jerry Boddington.

"Even with the Cornish weather trying its hardest to prevent the exercise from taking place, the British and Dutch gained valuable experience together, yet again proving the flexibility of the Royal Navy's multi-role Merlin."

"820 Squadron is working very hard at the moment - half my people were deployed over Christmas, away from their loved ones."



● *Pass to the Dutchie... An 820 NAS Merlin ferries supplies on to one of the Dutch amphibious ships during Bright Archer*

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● Clockwise from top left: The Pacific lives up to its reputation; spectacular sunrises and sunsets became a familiar part of life; a Monmouth sailor surfs the safe way on Bondi Beach in Australia; Monmouth's sea boat in action; Monmouth's club-swinger LPT Pat Patterson shows his delight at arriving back in Devonport; formal occasions demanded formal dress at almost every port of call; an elephant is put to work washing down the ship at Cochin in India; Commanding Officer Cdr Tim Peacock is invited to join native dancing at Jakarta; CPO Jesse James takes to the air during circuit training at sea on Monmouth's flight deck; (below right) ship's photographer for the first part of the deployment, LA(Phot) Dave Griffiths, submits to King Neptune's court at a crossing the line ceremony – brandishing the scissors is WO 'Kep' Canning

Pictures: LA(Phot) Brian Douglas and LA(Phot) Dave Griffiths

Travellers

THE Doctor has his Tardis, but Cdr Tim Peacock and his team travelled through time in HMS Monmouth.

True, we are not talking about a Type 23 at the Battle of Trafalgar, but even so there has been some impressive warping of time since Monmouth left the UK in February for Volans 07.

At first the changes were barely noticeable, with the clocks creeping forward an hour or so as she made her way east, through Suez and on towards the Indian sub-continent.

But as the ship continued eastward, the Tardis effect really kicked in.

On leaving Japan she had a ten-day run across the turbulent Pacific to Hawaii, and by chance (or so everyone claims) she crossed the International Date Line on that most hallowed of Naval occasions, October 21.

From being almost half a day ahead of the UK, the ship instantly slipped to almost 12 hours behind – and enjoyed two Trafalgar Days.

Several sailors mentioned the



uniformity of days at sea on such a long crossing – *Groundhog Day* was mentioned more than once, as time seemed to loop over and over.

Time took another lurch when Monmouth reached Hawaii; Thursday was followed by Sunday – 'lazy Sunday,' a complete day off.

Sunday was, naturally, followed by Saturday, then Sunday again, and as the Black Duke sailed east, via the Panama Canal and out into the Atlantic, the clock continued to slow.

And to top it all, Christmas came a month early – the sailors celebrated together before they scattered on arrival back in the UK last month.

Whatever the time, it was always put to good use; deployments start at the beginning these days.

That may seem an obvious statement, but in years gone by such an itinerary would be planned as a series of objectives (exercises, visits etc) interspersed with low-key passages at sea.

Low-key no longer exists.

Even as the frigate headed south from Devonport, her sensors were already picking up shipping movements, adding pieces to the

colossal maritime jigsaw which is becoming clearer all the time – and which gives illegal traffickers, whether of arms, drugs or people, less and less room for manoeuvre.

Many of those sea crossings, which normally allow ship's husbandry and routine tasks to be carried out, proved less than benign – Monmouth was buffeted by huge waves and vicious gales for days on end, the last of the storms catching them in the Atlantic on the final days of the trip.

Almost 30 ports were visited, some of which had not welcomed the Navy for decades – which kept Navigating Officer Lt Matt Sykes on his toes.

He had the benefit of WECDIS (Warship Electronic Chart Display Information System), which performed flawlessly.

Nonetheless, there was a fair bit of paper around the chart table, as 'Navs' and trainees continued to practise the traditional methods.

"WECDIS has been excellent," said Lt Sykes. "It adds so much to the bridge in terms of awareness."

He admitted some of the pilotage was "interesting" where countries had not updated charts for several years – though British warships still carry out visual pilotage as a matter of course in any port, using WECDIS to plan the manoeuvre.

The ship's progress has been followed by local, and sometimes national, media, making her CO something of a media pundit.

Indeed, taking the ship safely round the world was perhaps the more straightforward part of Tim Peacock's job – he was, after all, well trained for the role.

It would probably be fair to say that various additional duties were not on the training syllabus – such as Indonesian dancing on the jetty at Jakarta and karaoke at the Filipino Navy Fleet HQ in Manila.

The importance of Monmouth's interaction with navies along the way





through time

cannot be overstated.

In the major Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) exercise Pacific Shield held in Tokyo Bay in October, designed to encourage international co-operation in strangling trade in weapons of mass destruction and their components, Monmouth's boarding parties and ship's flight found themselves at the centre of considerable attention from allied navies and the media.

For despite the HMS Cornwall blip (during which episode Monmouth was working hard in Aden, doing her bit towards maintaining the Navy's reputation), the RN is still seen as one of the leading practitioners in the art of boarding and searching ships.

The Black Duke also had key roles in a number of other first-rate multinational exercises, such as Bersama Shield in the Far East, and joined anti-smuggling and counter-terrorist operations along the way – Active Endeavour in the Med, and Calash in the Indian Ocean, to name but two.

Monmouth was also in demand for training purposes, such as passing on counter-terrorism techniques to the Indonesians, Filipinos, Yemenis and others.

It was not all work, of course, and the ship's company found plenty of ways to entertain themselves when not on duty – such as a witches race night at Hallowe'en, and a village fête on the flight deck, complete with navalised stalls.

That a group of 190 or so people can travel round the world in such close proximity and still get on with each other is testament to the ethos of Monmouth.

LLogs(CS(D)) – or LStd in old money – 'Brad' Bradshaw, said: "I think it is important to have a good command team, because everything flows from that.



"And this ship has been lucky to have had good commanders."

Volans 07 has given people like Brad the chance to use all their skills; in his case, juggling accommodation on board for the dozens of visitors and managing a cocktail reception at every port, attracting up to 300 guests, in addition to normal tasks and accounting.

Being unsupported meant Monmouth topping up from local sources, be it alcohol for cocktail receptions or fuel for the diesels.

And that meant extra responsibilities for many, such as the marine engineer team, who maintain power plants and 'hotel services'.

Marine Engineer Officer Lt Cdr Rory Stewart – who already had one global deployment under his belt with HMS Trafalgar in 1997

– and his team were pretty much self-sufficient for long periods.

On arrival in Hawaii in October, for example, Monmouth had spent 42 of the previous 50 days at sea, and he said the engineers had risen to the occasion.

"It has not been trouble-free – we have had our fair share of major defects – but I have got a very good team," said Lt Cdr Stewart.

"We have managed to keep on top of it, and to get stores in time."

"Fuelling has been one of the issues.

"Generally, when a ship does this sort of deployment it goes with a tanker, but we have done it without."

Most of the fuel stops were organised by the Fuels Group at MOD Abbey Wood, but in most

cases engineers had to check the quality of fuel before pumping.

"In some places we have been offered some rubbish," he said. "And as a nuclear engineer, with submarines only needing to refuel every ten years or so, this sort of thing was something of a novelty."

Another "issue" concerned the water desalination plant, which affected the laundry, galley and bathroom facilities – a double whammy in terms of sweaty days and nights and water conservation.

"There is a lot of hearts and minds stuff here. We cannot let the laundry build up – though, of course, being a submariner, I do not understand the concept of washing either..." he said.

Lt Cdr Stewart's deputy, Lt Andy Rushworth – also one of the frigate's two Boarding Officers – welcomed the "wonderful challenges", adding: "I have been able to work as an engineering manager at sea, rather than being stuck alongside at Devonport with loads of paperwork."

Executive Officer Lt Cdr Paul Bristowe said there had been some family difficulties on board, which was to be expected on such a long deployment.

"But everyone on board realises just how lucky we were to get this programme, and I think everyone has tried to give 100 per cent professionally, and to get the most out of the places we have visited."

The ship's flight, of 829 Naval Air Squadron, featured heavily in Monmouth's programme, showing the Merlin's capabilities to potential buyers around the world.

The aircraft – call sign BlackBird – worked closely with the frigate's boarding parties, and early in the deployment it rescued a crew in the Med after their ship Afrodite S began to sink in rough weather.

● *Global perspective – page 14*



Global perspective

IT MIGHT have been a long time away – nine months in the modern Navy is an unusually-long deployment.

And it might have been gruelling, with arduous sea crossings alternating with the spit-and-polish of high-profile visits in dozens of ports.

But the ship's company of HMS Monmouth was in no doubt that they were still the envy of the Fleet, on the deployment that most would give their eye-teeth for.

And from Commanding Officer Cdr Tim Peacock down, they acknowledged that they were in a privileged position, one that they would be able to look back on with pride years from now.

The Black Duke clocked up some notable landmarks after leaving Devonport in February.

"We were the first big British or American ship to visit Aden since the attack on the USS Cole," said Cdr Peacock.

"We visited 28 ports in 19 countries, and have shown the White Ensign in places which haven't seen it in 40 or 50 years.

"We believe Monmouth is the first ship to circumnavigate the globe since 2000, and the first to do it unsupported since 1995."

She also acted as flagship for First Sea Lord and Commander-in-Chief Fleet at various times.

Whatever the status and capabilities of a Type 23 frigate, it is only – as anybody in the Navy will tell you – as effective as the people operating it.

Monmouth played her part in numerous exercises en route, but the truly impressive element was the human one.

Executive Officer Lt Cdr Paul Bristowe was full of praise for the men (and woman) of Monmouth, and identified three heroes as representative of the collective effort.

CPO Martin Clewes ensured the diesels kept turning despite the punishment a global deployment metes out – the engines provide far more economical cruising than gas turbines, and Chief Martin managed to achieve an impressive level of availability.

LS 'Hitch' Hitchin was singled out for the many occasions he dangled over the side of the frigate, ensuring the ship was at her sparkling best in each port.

And LPT Pat Patterson, the ship's clubswinger, won the accolade 'man of the deployment.'

Pat was certainly kept busy.

Sporting fixtures are a prominent feature of long deployments, and

the Internet allowed Pat to make contact with sports clubs along the ship's route in advance.

Highlights for the football team included the high-profile 3-2 win against the South Korean Navy in the 1882 Cup, and a match in Indonesia against the nation's maritime college which was preceded by a marching band of 150 musicians (won 8-1).

The team's success rate in more than 20 games, winning more than half, was commendable considering the withering heat and humidity – a game against an Indian Army team in the Andaman Islands on a pitch hacked out of the forest was typical.

"After 15 minutes the lads had had enough," said Pat. "Even the locals did not want to play the full game because of the humidity, so we played two 20-minute halves."

The rugby team lost more than half of their dozen or so matches, though matches in Australia and New Zealand never prove easy.

Training on board required imagination – the flight deck, hangar and midships cross-passage were used for line-out practices and scrums, while the backs went through their moves in slow-time.

Other sports included water polo, basketball and tug o' war, while domestically there was also deck cricket and bucketball – a brutal form of basketball – to while away long hours at sea.

Pat also had the usual programme expected on a British warship – flight-deck circuits at sea, a multigym in the winch-well, and a cross-training bike.

And there was also the constant need for RN Fitness Tests – pretty much everybody on board, from the CO down, had to undergo the annual test – in Cdr Peacock's case, on a jetty at Pearl Harbor early on a Saturday morning.

Many tests had to be staged before sunrise, because of the heat, but despite the odds stacked against them most of the crew sailed through.

Any spare time? Pat was also the man responsible for getting Daily Orders and duty watch rosters down on paper, and was the Leading Hand of the mess deck for the 18 Man Mess.

"It has been a great experience for me – the ship's company is very good, very motivated and fit, which makes my job easier," he said.

Adventurous Training (AT) was another opportunity gratefully taken up by many.

AT Officer CPO Jesse James said the 16-strong New Zealand group was a good example.

"We were sponsored by the Sports Lottery and the Fleet



Amenities Fund, so the training cost the lads £50 each," said CPO James.

They got through white-water rafting, kayaking, mountain biking, indoor climbing; they scaled the volcano Mt Ruapehu – "and, being matelots, once we got above the snow-line we had a snowball fight," he added.

"It was like a dozen idiots hurling snow at each other – we hadn't seen snow that deep in years."

More than a dozen sailors qualified as divers in Malaysia and the Philippines.

"We get a week's AT allowance a year, and I think if you do not take it you are an idiot."

Travel and communications in the 21st century make it far easier for a ship like Monmouth to keep in touch with the folks – and office – back home.

CPO 'Gorgeous George' Blakeman was particularly lucky in that respect.

He flew back to the UK from the Philippines to undertake four weeks training in the autumn.

"I finished the course at HMS Collingwood on the Friday, got back home to Plymouth and my wife went into labour," he said.

"I took her to hospital, and an hour later our little girl was born."

It proved quite a momentous time for the chief – the following day his Divisional Officer rang to congratulate him and his wife, and to tell him that he will go to Dartmouth in April to train as an

officer (or "back to the bottom of the pile" as the senior rate put it).

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime deployment – people will still be talking about this ten or 15 years from now."

Another chance for families to keep in touch came when the Black Duke went through the Panama Canal.

Cdr Peacock said many on board had contacted their loved ones to tell them to watch the Panama Canal webcam on the Internet, and in the case of at least one man – PO 'Cookie' Cook – Mum stayed up all night to watch (Cookie made it easier to spot him by jumping up and down on the bridge wing and waving).

Sadly, one member of the crew was missing when the frigate edged her way into Plymouth Sound, having been lost at sea in the Bay of Biscay.

"Three days from the end of the deployment we put Fred, the Man Overboard dummy, over the side, and he sank like a stone," said Cdr Peacock.

"I wasn't happy as one of my key objectives, not to lose anyone, failed at the last hurdle."

"But rumours that I have written to Mrs Fred to break the bad news have been exaggerated."

The loss of Fred failed to take the gloss off a successful trip.

"It has been a superb deployment with a fantastic ship's company, which just achieved so many different tasks in so many different places with such style," said Cdr Peacock.



● **Commanding Officer Cdr Tim Peacock is happy with the progress of a replenishment at sea (top); dealing with a difficult delivery in deck cricket (right); Monmouth's Merlin helicopter BlackBird in Sydney (below right)**

Pictures: LA(Phot) Dave Griffiths and LA(Phot) Brian Douglas

● **HMS Monmouth returns to Devonport last month (below)**

Picture: LA(Phot) Shaun Barlow



Armada.....	1588
Cadiz.....	1596
Portland.....	1653
Gabbard.....	1653
Barfleur.....	1692
Velez Malaga.....	1704
Martinique.....	1794
Egypt.....	1801
China.....	1860
Sabang.....	1944
Burma.....	1944-45
East Indies.....	1944-45
Al Faw.....	2003

Class: Multi-beam survey ship
Pennant number: H130
Builder: Brooke Marine, Lowestoft
Launched: November 14 1985
Commissioned: October 3 1986
Displacement: 1,477 tonnes
Length: 64 metres
Beam: 13 metres
Draught: 5.5 metres
Complement: 52
Speed: 14 knots (max)
Range: 4,000nm range at 10 knots
Propulsion: Four Mirreles Blackstone diesel engines, 3,040hp, two shafts with controllable pitch propellers
Sonar: Kongsberg Simrad EA400 singlebeam sonar and EM1002 multibeam sonar suites; GeoAcoustics 2094 sidescan sonar system.
Armament: Four 7.62mm General Purpose Machine Guns; two M323 Mk44 7.62mm miniguns; GAMBO 20mm cannon

Facts and figures

Small but perfectly formed

THIS month sees survey ship HMS Roebuck become centre of attention when she assumes the role of flagship for the NATO Standing Naval Mine Countermeasures Group 1 at a change of command ceremony in Zeebrugge.

The Force of up to eight ships from nine nations, including Belgium, Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Latvia, Estonia, Spain and Norway is tasked to operate as the NATO mine countermeasures reaction force, clearing the abandoned ordnance of conflict from European coasts.

At the head of her group, Roebuck will be conducting exercises and mine clearance work off Scotland, throughout the Baltic, along the European Atlantic coastline and on into the Mediterranean and North Africa.

Designed for hydrographic surveys, this is not the first time that the survey ship has taken on the mantle of support ship for MCMVs on deployment.

Plans to lay her up in 2003 were shelved in favour of a comprehensive refit and upgrade which has extended her Service life to 2014.

Roebuck rattles up an impressive history, with the name dating back to the very beginnings of the Battle Honour board – the Armada.

The first was a Flyboat purchased from the Dutch in 1585 which served with Raleigh. The next, a 10-gun vessel, of 1636 was lost in a collision in 1641.

Her successor was captured in 1646 from Spanish 'Dunkirkers' and commissioned into the Royalist Navy in 1648. A year later she was captured by Parliamentarians in Kinsale, and sold off two years



● Survey ship HMS Roebuck, photographed from the air by ET(WE) Mark Harvey of the ship's company

later. Meanwhile an armed ship was hired 1649-51.

Another capture of a 34-gun ship in 1653 brought the next appearance of the name, but the ship was hulked in 1664. A sixth-rate was built in Harwich in 1666 and sold in 1683.

The name next appeared on a fireship purchased in 1688, although with the construction of

a new fireship at Wapping in 1690 the earlier ship became known as Old Roebuck and the new build took over the name.

The Old Roebuck was sunk as foundations in Portsmouth in 1696, and the other Roebuck foundered in 1701 in the more exotic waters off Ascension Island.

A fifth-rate of 1704 was dismantled and rebuilt before ending

up as a breakwater off Sheerness, and two more fifth-rates followed with varying careers. A wood-screw gun-vessel of 1856 was sold on eight years later.

Now the name waited until the arrival of a 400-ton destroyer in 1901 that served until 1919. A merchant Roebuck was called into service as a minesweeper in 1914 but her name was swiftly changed

to Roedean.

The penultimate Roebuck was a 1942 destroyer, 'launched' by a near-miss bomb and submerged for nine months. In 1953 she was converted to a frigate, and sold on in 1968.

In the midst of World War 2 another merchant ship Roebuck was called up as a barrage balloon vessel in 1940.

HEROES OF THE ROYAL NAVY No.45

Lt Cdr Walter Fletcher AM

THE Gipsy Moth light aircraft coasts to a stop on the runway and the pilot jumps out. Slight figure, wavy chestnut hair, a glamorous smile to the watching crowd at Darwin airport.

"I'm afraid I didn't break the record, but you don't seem to mind that – it's jolly sporting of you."

Amy Johnson. Amy, wonderful Amy, as the popular song named her.

On May 24 1930 she arrived in Australia, having flown 8,600 miles in 19½ days – two days slower than the record she had so desperately tried to beat.

But she had captured the public's imagination, the first woman to fly solo from England to Australia, and her exhausting flight was followed by an equally exhausting publicity tour that rushed her from one end of the country to the other.

Her return to England in August was hailed with similar hoopah, the *Daily Mail* rushing to buy her story and for the princely sum of £10,000 launch the aviatrix on another PR tour of the UK.

The cult of celebrity thrived then as now, and Amy was caught up in the media spotlight as she continued her pursuit of record-breaking flights.

Her subsequent marriage to a dashing co-pilot Jim Mollison foundered amid press reports of his infidelities and her absences.

And flying which was once the stuff of legend as the years moved on became an everyday activity, and long-distance flights drew little interest from the fickle public.

Amy's attempts to gain a professional career as a pilot met with blank looks and shaking heads, no one saw anything beyond her notoriety.

She even became reckless in everyday life, with charges for dangerous driving against her.

In 1937 her friend Amelia Earheart disappeared over the Pacific Ocean, much to Amy's shock, and she tried to turn her back on the activity that had made her name.

But this was a passion that could not be simply cut loose, and soon she was waxing lyrical on the joys of gliding.

Then war brought an abrupt transformation to the England she knew. She had a future once more as a professional pilot.

In 1940 Amy began working for the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) – also known as the Ancient and Tattered Airmen, flying military aircraft from factories to airbases for £6 a week and enjoying life in the air once more.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, Lt Cdr

Walter Edmund Fletcher had a solid, respected Naval career. He had served as navigator on an expedition to Baffin Island in the Arctic, and now had command of barrage balloon vessel HMS Haslemere.

On January 5 1941, aged 34, he was escorting merchant ships in convoy CE21 on the Thames Estuary.

A glance at the grey sky on that bitterly-cold day promised nothing but more snow.

Except for a circling Airspeed Oxford aircraft and a parachutist floating down at a distance of some 1½ miles.

Lt Cdr Fletcher pulled his ship away from the convoy, and with an escort vessel and motor launch went to the aid of the parachutist.

Haslemere grounded on the estuary's sandbanks, and while the crew struggled to refloat the ship a voice was heard from the waves shouting that she was Amy Johnson and the water was bitterly cold.

In the grey waters near the stern could be made out two indistinct shapes, but ropes tossed to the struggling pilot were carried away by the fierce current.

Reports were confused although all attest to the bravery of Fletcher.

The crew of Haslemere had realised that the pilot was a woman, but thought there was a second body in the water.

One of the figures was drawn as it smashed down in the heavy swell, then lost from sight.

Fletcher jumped into the grey water, fully-clothed, to the rescue. The icily-cold waves caught him in their grip as he struggled towards the remaining shape in the water.

He reached it, then abandoned it and set out for the launch. He was dragged aboard unconscious.

Five days later he died without regaining consciousness at the Royal Naval Hospital in Gillingham. He was given a posthumous Albert Medal for saving life at sea.

Lt Cdr Fletcher's grave lies in Woodlands Cemetery in Gillingham, looking out over the Thames Estuary.

And the body of Amy Johnson was never recovered.

Her death continues to provoke questions. Confusing contemporary reports and recent interviews have fed claims of conspiracy and cover-up.

Why was the aircraft so significantly off course? Was there another body in the water? Did the actions of someone on board pull Amy into the propellers of the ship?

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Deep

THREE words in the world of the Silent Service will send a shiver down any submariners' spine: Submiss, Subsmash and Subsunk.

Submit – submarine missing – is invariably the result of a Subsmash – submarine collision or accident – and can lead, tragically, to Subsunk (the codename's self-explanatory).

It's been almost six decades since British deeps had to leave a stricken boat for real.

Most of HMS Truculent's crew safely escaped from their crippled submarine on a January night in the Thames in 1950 – a triumph for the escape system.

But only a handful were actually saved; most died of cold or were swept out to sea.

Half a century later, a specialist team ensures submariners who reach the surface have someone to look after them until a rescue ship arrives.

Normally when we feature the Submarine Parachute Assistance Group's training it's (a) in the Solent (b) cold (c) grey.

It is not (a) half a world away (b) warm (c) sunny.

So Exercise Pacific Reach in Cockburn Sound, Western Australia, proved to be a welcome change of scenery.

SPAG were not the only guests of the Royal Australian Navy's Submarine Escape Training Facility – the Antipodean equivalent of Gosport's SETT: Canadian, Chinese, South Korean, Japanese, Malaysian, American

and Singaporean deeps were also invited to Garden Island, near Fremantle.

So we have the rescuers in place. What about the rescuees?

Three submarines were on hand to play the part of 'victims', sitting on the bottom of the Indian Ocean (yes, we know the exercise was 'Pacific Reach').

Inside the 'stricken' boats, deeps donned escape suits, clambered into an airlocked chamber – the escape tower – waited for it to flood, opened a hatch then swam to the surface. In theory, they should be able to do this down to depths of 180 metres (590ft).

It's at this point that SPAG and their foreign counterparts come into their own.

For waiting on the ocean's surface should be a rescue team with all the emergency supplies and aid needed to look after the escaped submariners until warships and rescue vessels appear on scene.

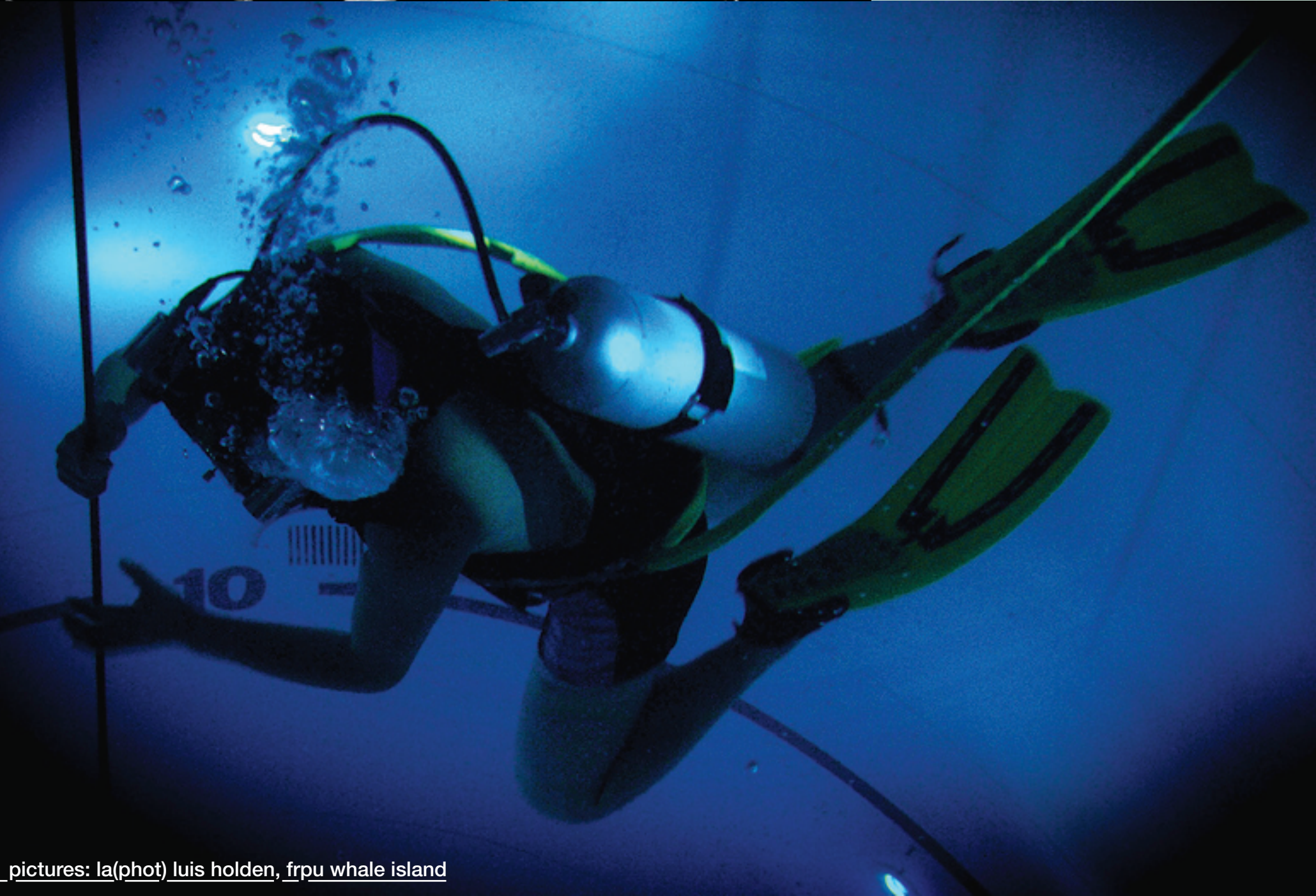
There's only one way for the team to get out here (the 'P' in the acronym probably gives it away...).

SPAG members are expected to leap out of the back of a Hercules at heights up to 3,000ft.

That RAF Hercules is permanently on stand-by at RAF Lyneham, while the SPAGgers (*made-up word – Ed*) themselves



● *Deep blue tank...* (Below) a SPAG diver practises in the dive tank at the Australian submarine rescue training centre and (left) the rescuers prepare to leap out of a Hercules over the ocean



pictures: la(phot) luis holden, frpu whale island

South

are constantly at six hours' notice to move.

Wherever the team goes, so too its kit: inflatable boats and life rafts, hot and cold rations, first-aid and oxygen equipment, comms kit to talk to the submarine, fuel and fresh water.

"We represent the world's only long-distance submarine intervention service of our type," says SPAG officer Lt Andrew Sharp proudly.

"Being able to get on to the water and render medical assistance ensures the best means of survival for escaping personnel."

And so the rescuers, including specialist hyperbaric (the use of oxygen at higher than normal atmospheric pressure) doctor Surg Lt Jane Lloyd, bobbed around on the surface in brightly-coloured life rafts, hauling the escapees out of the water and administering aid before the Australian rescue vessel Seahorse Standard arrived.

Not all the training was in open waters. The RAN, like the RN, has a Submarine Escape Training Tank (SETT) where the rescuers and rescuees practised (in water at a balmy 34°C) before heading out to the sea.

SETT's Lt Cdr Bob Mannion is in no doubt that the four-day exercise benefited his team – and showed Allied navies what British rescuers can do.

"It's been a shop window opportunity for how we do business," he explained.

"The Singaporeans are particularly interested in the SPAG concept as they could develop something of their own along similar lines.

"For us, we've been able to see how others work, building on our current expertise, learning from other people and developing our skills."



● Buoy zone... A diver heads for a buoyance aid during a practice of medical evacuation techniques and (right) lord of leaping... CPO Ian 'Curly' Callow jumps from a helicopter to set up a 'floating casualty reception centre' for casualties from a stricken submarine



● Let's go to work... the SPAG team – (l-r) CPO Chris Dello, Lt Andy Sharp, CPO Phil Morton, Lt Cdr Bob Mannion, CPO Iain Hamblin, Surg Lt Jane Lloyd and PO(MA) Mike Antell – fully suited-up ahead of their rescue mission



● Lt Col Russell Paul from FOST Devonport with children from Drake Primary School

Hundreds for hundreds

A SWIMMING and rowing challenge in aid of Cancer Research UK was set up by the FOSTies of Devonport.

One hundred and eleven swimmers and 100 rowers were mustered from the RN, RM, their families and civilian workers at the Plymouth base.

The original challenge laid down for the swimmers was to swim the width of the Channel in the 25m Naval base pool – but with all the willing participants 22 miles rapidly blossomed into 140 miles (or 8,942 lengths) in total.

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● *Right: Submariners from HMS Triumph working on the Japanese garden at Derriford Hospital*



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Gary spent years in the Sultanate of Oman training apprentices in the Sultan's Armed Forces, and the collection, entitled *Thoughts of a Shipmate*, includes 21 poems and numerous photographs about his time away from home.

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If you would like to support Gary's efforts and buy a copy of this unique book, he can be reached on 023 9258 2761.

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His choice of charity was inspired by the classic film *Ice Cold in Alex* and his own experiences of the effects of landmines seen during his four-year career with the Green Berets.

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● Medical Assistant Chris Pearson kept an up-to-date web-log (or blog) of his experiences under training at HMS Raleigh

Picture: Dave Sherfield

Blog into Raleigh

TRAINEE Medical Assistant Chris Pearson has been keeping a regular online diary about his life under training within HMS Raleigh's gates.

The 35-year-old signed up for life in the Navy after many years in civvy street, and brings a mature eye to bear on his daily travails.

He said: "I hope that people will look at my experiences on the website, particularly more mature people like myself."

"For my age group, joining the Royal Navy is like being given the chance of a second career and for me personally it's an opportunity to do something with a purpose and worthwhile."

"I also think that the life experience we older people can bring can only benefit the Royal Navy."

He added: "Initial training has been a challenge, but on the whole a well-balanced course of nine weeks."

"It has proved that all you need is determination and hard work to achieve almost anything."

Chris' diary covers one of the newly-expanded basic training

courses that Raleigh has been running since September.

See www.royalnavy.mod.uk/server/show/nav.5461.

Never too old for new shores

SURGEON Cdr Eric King-Turner, veteran of World War 2, has had to step down from his post as President of the Indomitable Association.

Not because of his remarkable age—103—but because the survivor of Op Pedestal, Kamikaze attacks off Sumatra and the ramming of the ship by HMS Quilliam in dense fog, is emigrating to New Zealand.

Ralph Harvey of the association said: "During the time on board, Eric was to be called on many times to tend the many seriously injured crew."

"As he is now 103 years old, I think his exploits should be recognised."

Submariner rushes to help boys in danger

A SUBMARINER who went to the aid of boys in the River Tamar has received a Royal Humane Society award for his courage.

PO Neil Robinson of HMS Sovereign was given the award—the RHS Testimonial on Vellum—for "courageously putting himself at great personal risk to save the lives of two boys and attempting to save the life of another."

Neil and his wife Cynthia were walking their two dogs along the river's banks when they heard cries for help. The boys had been using a rubber dinghy on the river but started to get into trouble.

Neil said: "When we reached the scene we noticed that three boys were in deep water and were struggling against the outgoing tide."

"One of the boys was motionless with just the top of his head showing. I immediately entered the water and swam out to help the boys."

"By the time I reached the area the boys were in, the tide was starting to drift them apart."

The motionless boy had sunk beneath the water. Neil made several attempts to find the boy in the dark and muddy waters but to no avail.

"After what seemed minutes had gone by," he went on, "I had to think about the other two boys. One of the other two boys had stayed nearby so I dragged him to the shallow water so that he could stand up and walk out of the water. My wife looked after him."

The third boy was now 100m down stream, caught up in the strong tides of the river. Neil swam back into the fast-flowing tide to catch up with him.

"Luckily the deflated dinghy



● PO Neil Robinson with Christopher Tout, Dean Lennox and Gareth Weeks, the brother of Christopher Weeks

Picture: LA(Phot) Steve Johncock

was next to him," he said. "I wrapped the dinghy line around the boy and headed for the shore, the tide was very strong and I had to take my time, but eventually we got out of the riptide."

Neil's wife cared for the two shocked boys on the riverbank while the submariner continued to search for the lost boy. The police and a police boat arrived shortly afterwards, and an RAF search and rescue flight joined in the search.

Sadly three hours later, the body of Christopher Weeks, aged 13, was pulled from the water.

Neil said: "It turned out that Christopher had not been in the dinghy but had actually entered the water himself to help one of the boys who tried to get out of the deflating dinghy."

"Christopher Weeks is also a hero—unfortunately he paid the ultimate price for helping others."

Organisation for the disorganised

THE EXPERIENCES of a Naval wife have led to an enterprising new business.

Susan Bonnar née Cotton, known as Dot in her own Naval days, created Dottie Designs out of her experience as an air

traffic controller at Yeovilton while her husband was away on HMS Argyll.

Susan said: "From one person asking me to do a card for their father I was inundated by the chaps that I worked with at Yeovilton wanting to buy impressive, personalised cards for their loved ones without having to put down their cup of tea."

Susan has now left the Navy to dedicate herself full-time to her flourishing business, and offers services such as a 'deployment pack' so that sailors can be sure to have a card for every occasion while they are away, or even a 'sign and send' service for those who want to get a card to its destination on time without even seeing it.

Check out www.dottiedesigns.co.uk.

Reservist is exceptional

A RESERVIST at HMS Eagle has been awarded the Lord Lieutenant's Certificate for his exceptional services.

First Lt Richard Fletcher was praised for his energy and enthusiasm, particularly in organising weekend expeditions for new Reservists.

Lt Jeff McAlpine, a logistics specialist, at the same ceremony was awarded the Operational Service Medal for working as a staff officer in Afghanistan.

Red Plum runs like clockwork

THE WORSHIPFUL Company of Clockmakers, long-standing affiliate of HMS Endurance, awarded their annual prize of Man of the Year to CPOME Ben Jones.

The senior rating was chosen for his outstanding service and dedication to duty as the Outside Services Engineer on board in the 2005/06 deployment to the Antarctic.

Lt Cdr Matt Liddell, the ship's engineering officer, said: "CPO Jones really is Mr Defect Fixer."

"During this work period, we were challenged by a number of significant defects affecting the ship's survey boats and fridges."

"He worked around the clock to fix them, and allow the ship to go about her business down on the ice."

"It is almost impossible to find CPO Jones without dirty hands, tinkering with some oily engine part, and this award is a fitting acknowledgement of his hard work."

In recognition of his work during the iceship's stint in the South Atlantic, CPO Jones received an engraved tankard from David Poole, the Master of the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers.



● Matina Gall, finalist in the Young Chef of the Year

Picture: Dave Sherfield

She's a hot shot in the galley

JUST 12 weeks into her professional training at HMS Raleigh, 18-year-old trainee sailor Matina Gall was invited to be one of the 16 finalists in the British Culinary Federation's Young Chef of the Year competition.

The young chef was nominated by her Royal Navy instructors, and managed to net special praise for her food hygiene.

She prepared a meal of roasted sea bass on a bed of risotto to start, followed by best end of lamb with fondant potatoes, and all finished off by a whiskey brioche pudding.

Matina said: "I was so excited when I found out I had been selected for the competition."

"I'd never done anything like it before and I thought it would be fun and a challenge. I had three weeks to practise, during which I was also taking part in ship's protection training, so I was shooting a rifle by day and then practising for the competition at night."

"I was very nervous at the competition, but I think I did quite well. It has given me a better idea of what to expect next time and I'd definitely like to enter the competition again."

Her mentor, LLogs Mark Hunter, said: "We were all very pleased with how Matina performed during the competition. She managed her time in the kitchen extremely well and did herself and the Royal Navy proud."

around
the UK

AS EVER it's been a hectic few months with the Naval service dropping in, jumping forward and cooking up a storm in schools across the British Isles.

A Merlin helicopter from 824 NAS managed a busy programme of visits in Northern Ireland, calling on Coleraine Academical Institute, Dalriada School in Ballymoney, and St Macniss College in Carnlough.

Meanwhile schools in Counties Antrim and Down enjoyed the pomp and grandeur of five musicians from the Royal Marines Band Service.

The Brass Quintet, all based at the School of Music in Portsmouth, visited Belfast High School, Ashfield Boys School, Carrickfergus Grammar and Carrickfergus College, Ballymena Academy and Cambridge House in County Antrim, and Bangor Grammar and Regent House, Newtownards, in County Down.

WO Ian Davies, the team's bandmaster, said: "We're delighted to be taking part in these workshops as it's a fantastic opportunity for us to share our knowledge and experience with the budding musicians of Northern Ireland."

Royal Navy PT Instructors have been putting youngsters through their paces in schools in the north of England, visiting Macmillan Academy, Middlesbrough, Walker Comprehensive School, Newcastle, Hurworth Comprehensive in Darlington, and Harrogate High School, Oakbank Sports College in Leeds and Crawshaw School in Pudsey.

Students from Newcastle and Tyne Metropolitan Colleges and Riverside Training Centre spent a day with the north-east's maritime Reservists, organised by HMS Calliope in Gateshead and RMR Tyne in Newcastle.

Firefighting, boat handling, assault courses and fitness tests were all on offer to the eager youngsters, opening their eyes to the opportunities within the Maritime Reserves.

It's not just been the students who've been learning with the military; 17 teachers from across Scotland headed down south to the Commando Training Centre Royal Marines at Lympstone to find out a little bit more about life as a Commando.

Nicola Miller of West Lothian College said: "I had a fantastic two days at Lympstone. We really got to see at first hand what the recruits go through and then try a bit for ourselves."

"The commando slide was terrifying, but I'm glad I did it."

The Commandos went out to meet with more than 500 students and cadets from across the east of England at the Caldecotte Project in Milton Keynes.

Lt Col Steve Richards, Corps Colonel, said: "Meet the Marines is the key event which gets young men on the cusp of making their major decisions about their futures and shows them the possibilities, the realism and the excitement that life in the Royal Marines can offer."

It was Marine cooking that drew attention at Belmore All Boys School when C/Sgt Mike Beaton led the RN RM Chef Presentation Team to drop in on the school and show the children the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.

And in Weymouth, students from Budmouth Technical College got to see a Lynx at first hand when a helicopter from 815 NAS at Yeovilton dropped in. Whereas it was a Sea King from 845 NAS that hopped over to Birmingham to visit HMS Forward's Reserve base there and visit their affiliates at the Birmingham URNU.

Lt Millie Ingham, commanding officer of the Birmingham URNU, said: "We're delighted that 845 NAS have taken the time out from their busy operational programme to visit us."

"It's great for our students as they get the chance to see some real military hardware and speak to some serving officers about their experiences."

Cunningham called back for service

AFTER a three year gap, the famous name Cunningham is back heading up a division at HMS Raleigh.

Sixty-six new recruits joined up to Cunningham Division in November, the first to join that name in three years.

Cdre John Keegan formally re-opened the division to cope with the increased basic training time for ratings from eight to nine weeks.

WO Anthony Royle, the Cunningham Division Training Officer, said: "My team has put in a lot of hard work and effort over the last few months to bring the division back on line."

"The mess decks where the trainees sleep have been named after the four Type 22 frigates, and we have already established a good liaison with the ships."

"Each mess deck has a notice-board displaying up-to-date information about their adopted ship and key members of the ship's company."

"This means the trainees can take an interest in what is happening in the Fleet, helping to build a good military ethos."

He added: "With the arrival of our first group of trainees, the team are really looking forward to the challenge ahead."

The changes in basic training for ratings came into place in September, and feature an enhanced seamanship training package, more physical and ceremonial training and a high-tempo disaster relief exercise.

Nelson on the eve of battle

THE celebrations of the great Trafalgar bicentenary in 2005 sparked a new bronze sculpture of the great Naval hero himself.

Robert Hornyold-Strickland, himself the son of a Naval officer, was commissioned to produce a bronze portrait bust of how Nelson really looked.

He said: "With the benefit of the internet, books and the best maritime brains in Portsmouth and Greenwich, it became clear the best likeness would be achieved by studying the life mask produced in Vienna in late August or early September 1800, probably by Matthias Ranson and used by Franz Christian Thaller for the production of his famous marble bust which is dated 1801."

He added: "Although the original mask of Nelson (with his eyes closed to enable the wax to form an impression) is in the collection of the Royal Naval Museum in Portsmouth, I was fortunate to be able to take photographs and then later to borrow for a short time one of the limited number of copies of this mask made in the 1960s."

The sculptor decided to cast the Naval hero on the eve of his final battle, so he worked with the experts of both maritime museums to get the details of uniform, dress and hair as accurate as possible.

It was decided that, due to Nelson's vanity, he would have worn his hair low over his right eyebrow to hide the scar of his injury from the Battle of the Nile.

The new bronze portrait has been donated to Admiralty House in Portsmouth, the home of the Second Sea Lord.



● **Pussers in Boots:** Cunningham Division recruits, trainee Logisticians Ria Muggleston, Sheldon Bailey, Tom Whiteside and Rebecca Aitken, make a shining start to training

Picture: Dave Sherfield



● **British and French trainee logistics officers on the Raleigh assault course**

Picture: Dave Sherfield

Obstacles to Naval visitors

YOUNG players from Southampton Football Club Academy put aside their football boots in favour of muddy boots when they paid a call on HMS Collingwood for a spot of Naval training.

The academy players had to heft that familiar barrel through, over and under the obstacle course without letting it touch the rather-muddy ground.

Player Oscar Godbern said: "We were a little apprehensive before the day began, but at the end we all felt we had learned an awful lot about being a leader and managing people in different leadership tasking situations."

"Overall the day was brilliant even though we got wet and muddy."

One player, Matt Patterson, confronted his fear of heights at full pelt, scaling the 25ft A-frame on the course.

Meanwhile at HMS Raleigh trainee Logistics Officers from the French Navy took on the challenges of the Royal Navy at the Defence Maritime Logistics School.

The eleven officers spent two

days at the school, learning about the differing training methods, and joining their British counterparts on Raleigh's assault course.

Cdr Phil Waterhouse, Commandant of the Raleigh school, said: "Exchanges such as these provide an excellent basis for better understanding of the way each Navy operates, and particularly in our case, in the specialist area of logistics."

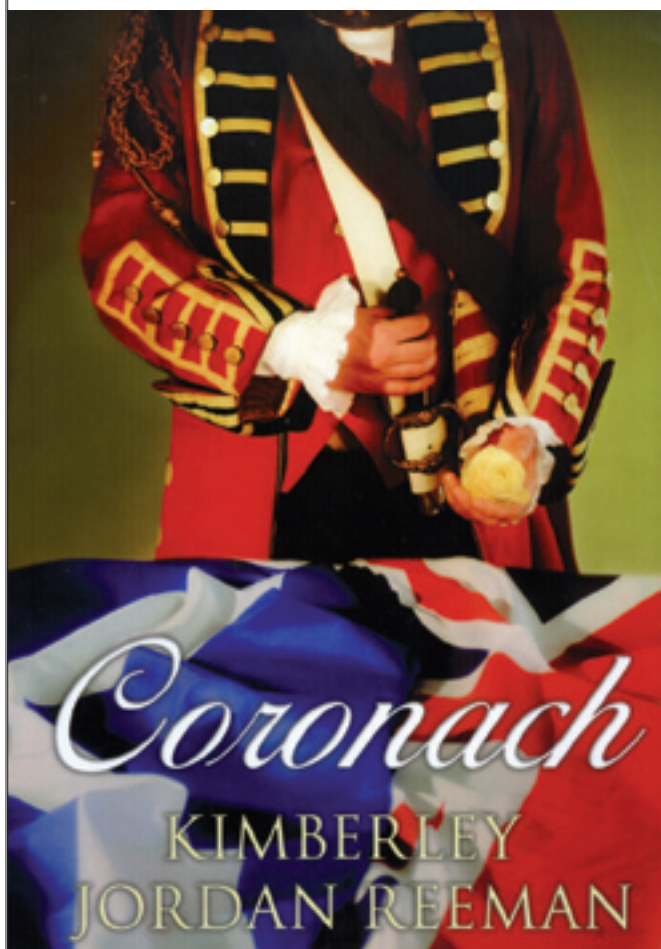
URNU win

THE first URNU midshipman (*we are told - Ed*) has won £5,000 on the RN RM Sports Lottery.

Mid Dave Kime of HMS Explorer and the Yorkshire URNU won £5,000, but he only joined up to take full advantage of the adventurous training opportunities that the scheme offered.

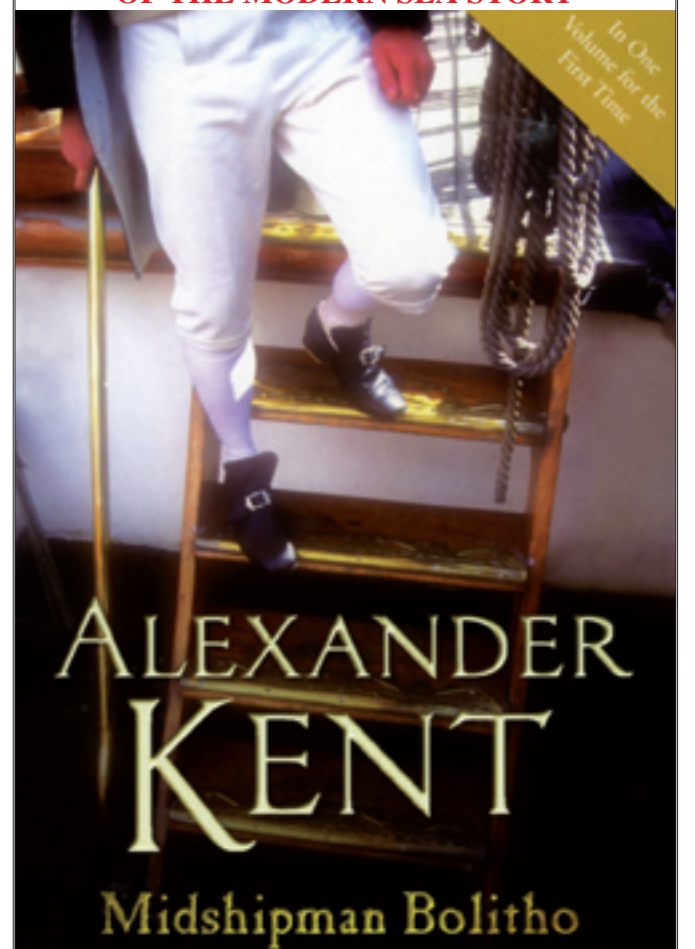
His commanding officer, Lt Andy Brown, said: "Bavaria Surprise was a great success, pushing the strength and ability of the students to the limit and importantly out of their comfort zone. To then win £5,000 was the icing on the cake."

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COMING SOON! *The Glory Boys*

AND you thought Tight Fit were just 1980s one-hit wonders...

HMS Exeter took a short cut on her way home from exercises in the Aegean Sea – and that meant squeezing through the legendary Corinth Canal.

After sailing from Gibraltar, as reported in last month's *Navy News*, the Portsmouth-based destroyer took part in exercises with the Turkish Navy and visited Istanbul.

Exercise Dogu Akdeniz – Eastern Aegean – is an invitation-only event hosted by Turkey which began with four days of briefings and familiarisation in Aksaz.

Exeter also led a disaster-relief exercise based on the aftermath of a medium-scale earthquake.

Members of the ship's company had the chance to visit the holiday resort of Marmaris before the integration phase of the exercise, in which ships operated as opposing Brown and Green forces.

The final free-play period involved non-combatant evacuation and embargo operations, along with skilled ship manoeuvring, before the whole flotilla headed for a wash-up at Izmir.

While at anchor,

the ship's company attended a Remembrance service, led by Church Officer S/Lt Chris Wood, assisted by a number of Young Officers.

Fine weather helped ensure a big turn-out for the service.

Before Exeter left Izmir her CO, Cdr Paul Brown, hosted a lunch for the Turkish admiral in charge of the exercise and the other ships' captains.

"The exercise was an excellent way to improve our force effectiveness and show our respective ship-handling capabilities," said Cdr Brown.

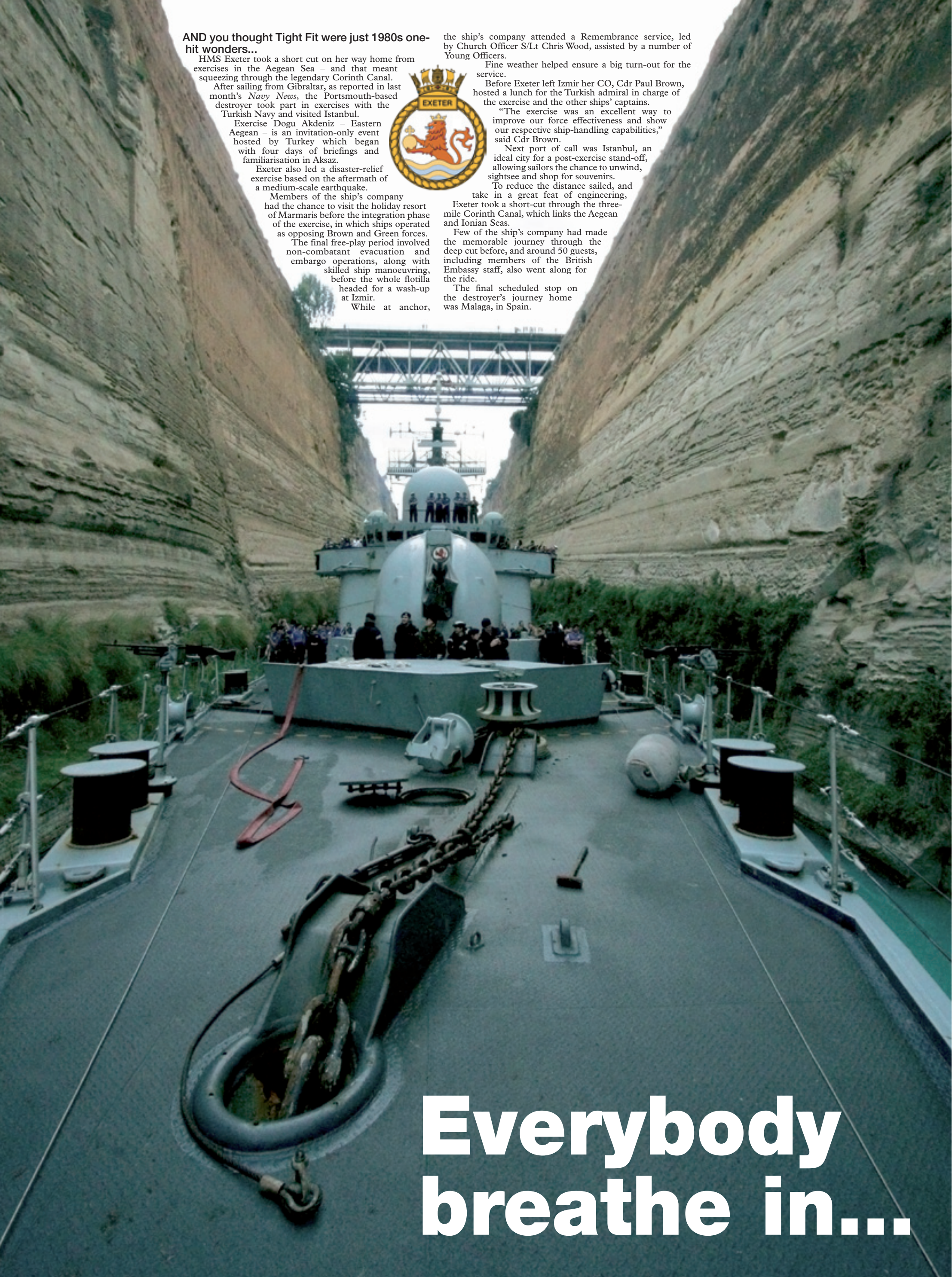
Next port of call was Istanbul, an ideal city for a post-exercise stand-off, allowing sailors the chance to unwind, sightsee and shop for souvenirs.

To reduce the distance sailed, and take in a great feat of engineering,

Exeter took a short-cut through the three-mile Corinth Canal, which links the Aegean and Ionian Seas.

Few of the ship's company had made the memorable journey through the deep cut before, and around 50 guests, including members of the British Embassy staff, also went along for the ride.

The final scheduled stop on the destroyer's journey home was Malaga, in Spain.



Everybody breathe in...

RUNNING aground is something the Royal Navy tries to avoid (but does, from time-to-time, manage).

On the shores of north Devon it's positively encouraged. In fact, it's a watchword.

For where the Rivers Taw and Torridge converge and flow into the Bristol Channel is the ideal place to train Britain's 'sea soldiers' and the vehicles they use to move from ship to shore.

The village of Instow is home to 11 (Amphibious Trials and Training) Squadron RM which tests and perfects the commandos' amphibious vehicles, landing craft and

raiders – and teaches the green berets how to use them.

Instow possesses, in the words of 11 Sqn's Officer Commanding Maj Jerry Slack, "a unique geography, a mile from which practically every type of beach in the world can be found".

The Admiralty certainly liked Instow. Sixty-five years ago it fixed its eyes upon the north Devon village and its beaches as it planned the greatest amphibious operation ever mounted.

Six decades on, we can only dream of landings on the scale of Operation Neptune.

But Instow is every bit as much a picture-postcard village – and every bit as much a centre of amphibious expertise.

A team 82 strong (68 of them civilians) oversee all aspects of the Corps' amphibious kit; it can also – and has done so – produce specialist kit for the front line if needed, such as bolstering protection for rigid raiders in Iraq.

Aside from trials and tests, a key role for the squadron is training commandos in the art of handling the craft they are expected to be in charge of in times of war.

By the time they arrive in Instow, commando drivers have already learned the art of driving at the Defence School of Transport at Leconfield in East Yorkshire.

They come here to learn how to guide their vehicles through the sea – they're expected to

ford or wade ashore in water up to 1½ metres (5 ft) deep.

As we featured in November in our article on exercises in the Solent, that's quite a challenge. It takes a good hour and a half to prepare a vehicle for its 'dip' – and all the various seals and plugs must be removed pretty sharpish once ashore.

"Having just got home from Afghanistan, driving neck-deep in water comes as something of a refreshing change," said Mne Stephen Davies, one of the drivers under training.

'Refreshing change' being a good green beret euphemism...

This 'refreshing

change' can be dangerous, however.

"It's quite easy for a Land Rover to flip thanks to the current or holes," Mne Davies added.

It is, but it's something the Royals must practise.

"The worst case scenario is that we land on a very shallow beach and that means that we have to ford," said Maj Slack.

"Pretty much every vehicle that the Royal Marines use can be waterproofed and used for fording."

● *An adapted Land Rover wades ashore at Instow*

Picture: PO(Phot) Gary Davies, FRPU Whale Island



Aground force

Claus encounters

SANTA clambered down the funnel (well the ladder at its side) on HMS Endurance, aided by AB(Elves) Steph Maynard and 'Chilli' Trebble, to bring some festive cheer to the crew of the ice ship in the Falklands.

Any resemblance between Father Christmas (a jovial chap with a beard) and Endurance's CO Capt Bob Tarrant (a jovial chap with a beard) are, we're told, purely coincidental. In any event, captains are far too serious to take part in such tomfoolery...

Picture: LA(Phot) Kelly Whybrow, HMS Endurance

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● Initial Bowman training for Recruits at Lympstone

Lessons in elite learning at Lympstone

ONCE upon a time, as it is jokingly said, it was 'teach, re-teach, beast', but now the mantra at the Commando Training Centre at Lympstone is 'teach, coach, mentor'.

There's no doubt that teaching is, and long has been, done brilliantly at the centre.

The coaching principles of top sportsmen are being put into practice at the training camp to ensure that the Royal Marines remain the best of the best.

Within the Commando Training Wing at the Devonshire base, Royal Marine Recruits are still put through the gruelling lessons in warrior life that are demanded for the front line.

But techniques of the sporting elite are used to ensure that the future green berets will be performing at their absolute peak at any hour of any day without requiring the looming presence of their Royal Marine instructor to inspire them to be the best.

C/Sgt Paul Wombwell of the Coaching Advisory Team at the establishment said: "We're using the psychology of top sportsmen to get the best out of people here."

"These techniques mean the difference between very good and outstanding."

The advisory team are out and about training the trainers to teach the lads strategies such as visualising success to perform at the top of their game.

"Statistically something has changed within recruit training," added C/Sgt Wombwell. "The number of guys getting through in the original troop has increased."

"Coaching has contributed to this success."

He laughs: "Although it's not a case of saying 'This bloke is completely unmotivated' – kerchink, kerchink, sprinkling some magic dust."

"Coaching isn't the soft option. It can be very tough."

"It's about understanding how people think and the way that affects performance."

"Gone are the days when we can just say 'You've failed to make the grade.' We need to work out why."

"But don't get the wrong idea. It is definitely not about making it easier to pass. If you're not good enough, you're gone."

"But maybe this guy is more than capable, but struggling to make the standard because of his mental approach."

"If he can get into the right frame of mind, see the goal that he wants, and understands how to get himself there, then he can perform at his best any time, anywhere. That's what we want."

And the Royal Marines know that the best example for any recruit is a Royal Marine.

Mentoring has long been in existence within the Corps – the green berets see themselves as a family, with brothers to turn to for advice and support.

At Lympstone they are making strong moves to widen the access to the Corps' 'family', bringing in the veterans of the Royal Marines Association to open eyes to the conflicts of the past.

Technology has moved on, but the bottom-line of the rifleman and his gun is the same as when conflict raged in Germany, France, Italy, Borneo, the Falklands.

"You should see the youngsters when the old boys come in," said C/Sgt Wombwell, "they're just hanging on every word they say."

"They can't believe what those men have seen. It's inspiring."



● Major General Sir Jeremy Moore, veteran Falklands' leader in one of his last acts before his death, takes the salute during the Royal Marines' Association reunion held at Lympstone. Brigadier Andy Salmon, Commandant CTCRM stands beside him



● Bowman on the front line: this picture made it to the front page of national newspapers last year as the Royal Marines fought the Taliban in the dust of Afghanistan

Royals who are radio active

"YOU can do a lot more damage with a radio than a rifle", says C/Sgt Adam Gill, Yeoman of Signals, as he pats a Bowman unit.

Let's be honest, being a Signaller in the Royal Marines is not regarded as the most warlike of professions.

But that's a big mistake. And one made by many in the Corps itself.

It may not have the immediacy of sniper rifles or mortar fire, but in this case, when you pull the trigger, it's a fast-jet bomber that takes out the enemy – comprehensively.

"No comms, no bombs is the phrase," adds Maj Andy Cross, once a mortar-fire controller, now a company commander.

Success in battle, success in warfare, has always relied on solid communications, knowing where your men are, your cavalry, your heavy guns.

The history of the world is littered with battles that have turned on a single wrong decision based on faulty information.

And that's where the Signallers are crucial.

The arrival of Bowman into service two years ago has transformed the world of the Signaller, in the same way as broadband has changed the world of communications for civilians.

The secure communications package, wrapped up in the varied forms and boxes in the Bowman system, delivers a punch in war-fighting that should not be underestimated.

C/Sgt Gill said: "Signallers are often at the front end – the sharp end."

"When the Marines went back for their oppo who was killed in Afghanistan, the two Marines strapped to the side of the Apache were both Signallers."

It's a fairly hefty branch within the Marines – 608 Signallers in a Force of some 7,000. It's evidence of a big commitment

Signals. It's an old-fashioned word for a branch that's bang up to date. In both senses of the term. But good on the Marines for holding true to their roots in the Specialist Wing at the Commando Training Centre Lympstone.



● Mne Richard Thomson on training as a Signaller

to (the grandly-titled) command, control, communications and intelligence, or C3I, on the battlefield. And the value of the skills in conflict.

Bowman delivers a phenomenal capacity to the frontline in a (relatively) small bundle – 'man-packable' as the Marines term it.

Within a white-painted room at Lympstone, four skeletal Land Rovers sit – this is the LBTA, or Land-Rover Based Training Aid. Ensnared within the back of the vehicles are laptops, the office-worker's travel essential shifted into the military man's travel means.

As the old saying goes, a picture paints a thousand words. Or in Bowman's case, a digital signal drops a location straight on to the

map on the computer screen. No fuss, no drama.

Once upon a time, (well, three years ago) this simple task could take up precious and bulky time as the signaller broadcast 'hand-draulically' his coded location over unreliable radio and the recipient uncoded the message.

Now it's a blip on the screen in real time. Oh, along with a MSN-style instant messenger real-time chat.

Although let's not make this sound too simple.

Signallers start out with a 14-week course at the entry (S3) level, seven weeks getting to grips with the VHF and HF radios that make up the manpack role, and another seven learning about Bowman in a vehicle-borne environment, which

is where the LTBA comes in. But the training is not locked in a classroom or a simulator.

On a chilly ridge in Devon, trainee signallers string up ground-wave and skywave antennas, and bounce signals through the skies.

Everything has to be set up correctly to work. And different set-ups produce different results, not to mention factors like time of day, weather conditions and where in the world for high frequency communications.

"Signallers are held in high esteem within the unit," said C/Sgt Dave Irons. "A young Signaller, out in Afghanistan, has a lot on his back trying to run a battle."

For the trainees, the time out on the ground in Devon makes a big difference.

Marine Richard Thomson admits that he didn't sign up with the Marines to become a Signaller, but adds: "Being on the course, you can see that it's very useful."

"You can't do a lot in battle without this kit. Information needs to get passed on. It is crucial to get it back to the command."

Information overload is now, however, a factor that needs to be guarded against.

You may think that a spell away from your desk produces an unending list of emails demanding your attention. Think of the battle commander, sat in the control centre, whether camp, ship or vehicle, with the stream of information flooding to him.

The Signaller needs to monitor that flow, guard its passage, and stem the stray waters where he can.

Wherever battle rages, there'll be a Signaller at the front. And wherever decisions are made, there'll be a Signaller at the commander's side.

Back in business

THE blast of the horn is enough to jolt us from the safe world of our morning elevenses.

Thrice it hoots, followed by the dull crack of a gun reverberating through the ship's hull.

A head pops through the wardroom door.

"It's a sheepdog," he says, then disappears.

Obviously.

What do sheepdogs do? They herd sheep.

Or in this case, dhows – dhows not co-operating.

The waters of the northern Arabian Gulf are busy. At the height of the fishing season – these waters are rich in hammour – there can be as many as 200 vessels bustling around. Plus there are the tankers waiting to berth at Iraq's two oil terminals.

On top of being busy, these waters are confined by borders geological and political. They are confined by the border with Iran, a short distance from one of the oil platforms, and they are confined by shoals and shallows.

To say it's tight is an understatement. The area the Allied warships patrol is roughly the size of Plymouth Sound – but by no means as deep.

Indeed, the sea here can be as shallow as ten metres – little more than 30ft. Given HMS Argyll's draught, there's perhaps a dozen feet of clearance between the keel and the seabed.

The 'sheepdog' begins to turn at speed as it tries to herd its 'sheep' (actually a US patrol boat playing the part of a particularly unresponsive dhow).

"Look at the wake," suggests Argyll's CO Cdr Gavin Pritchard.

So shallow is the water here, that Argyll leaves a muddy trail behind her, so much have her propellers stirred up the sandy seabed.

Another bang. And a flash from a flare. On the bridge wing, the signaller flashes the lamp furiously.

No-one is allowed within 3,000 metres (9,840ft) of the oil platforms without expressed permission.

But dhows do incur. Regularly. Not out of malice. They're trying to make a buck and save some fuel. Entering the exclusion zone spares a few drops. Sometimes they'll even leave their crab pots here. Whatever the infringement, it does raise the alert both on the platforms and the ships guarding them.

The nearest warship will give chase. As an observer it's good fun. For the bridge team it is challenging/demanding/hair-raising (delete appropriate RN understatement as applicable).

I said these waters were tight. I forgot to mention that they're peppered with wrecks – I count at least nine pink Xs on the WECDIS electronic chart the bridge team are keeping an eye on, marking the resting places of victims of this region's numerous conflicts.

If non-compliant dhows, the ever-present threat of insurgents and the possibility of hard-ball tactics by the Iranians are not enough to contend with, there's a constant babble on the radio; the locals seem particularly excitable and chatter all the time. Sometimes you can hear them singing. At others there's the odd sound of sheep drifting over the loudspeaker.

It all adds up to the "cauldron of the northern Arabian Gulf" as Cdr Pritchard calls it.

To foster better relations with locals, the Allied ships regularly send their boarding teams out on IPATs (interaction patrols) to chat with the fishermen, inquire about their health, ask if they've spotted anything unusual, give them fresh water, torches, leaflets.

Do the fishermen mind their work being interrupted?

"Some are friendly, some are grumpy," says ET(WE) Dale Aubrey, one of Argyll's boarding team.

"They will generally offer you tea, ciggies, perhaps fish. Life on the dhows is pretty basic – there's usually fish all over the deck, possibly a black and white TV. And it smells pretty bad."

Yet overall, dhow men and tanker crews alike welcome the presence

IN THE wake of the seizure of 15 sailors and marines from HMS Cornwall last March, boarding operations off Iraq have received a fundamental shake-up as **Richard Hargreaves** found when he visited the 'cauldron of the northern Arabian Gulf'.

of this Allied dragnet cast over the northern Gulf.

"This is a Coalition effort, but the RN has a huge footprint out here," says Capt James Gloak FPGRM, in charge of the commando boarding team aboard Argyll.

It does. Sweep the horizon with your binoculars on Argyll's bridge and you'll see Sir Bedivere, Argyll's two new RIBs on patrol, her flight of 815 NAS – the Wild Boar, named for the ship's badge – and probably survey ship HMS Enterprise too.

For many of Argyll's sailors, a patrol of the northern Gulf means six hours on, six hours off. And that's for three weeks, sometimes four at a time.

This is tiring work. Exhausting. Sometimes monotonous. But not unrewarding.

"Sometimes you have to take a step back and look at the bigger picture," says principal warfare officer Lt Cdr Paul Coverdale.

"Although it looks like the same thing every day, it is not, and that keeps us on our toes. Eventually, the Iraqis will be able to do this themselves. It's a long haul – step by step by step."

Cdr Pritchard adds: "We're not here for ever. One day the security of this region will be handed back to the Iraqis. We're working very hard towards that day."

The word 'Iraq' invariably only features in our newspapers and on our news bulletins alongside 'car bombing' or 'atrocities'.

There is 'good news' out here. But good news doesn't make the news.

Speak to anyone out here. Brit, American, Australian. They're convinced that they're doing a good job. But beyond that, they're convinced they're making a difference.

"There is definitely less smuggling and crime out here – Ali Baba activity. It used to happen all the time. We only know of one incident this time around," says Argyll's Commanding Officer.

He should know. He was out here 12 months ago in charge of HMS Kent. Today he's back with a different ship, different sailors.

"We're not on the front line as directly as the guys on the ground in Afghanistan or Iraq, but I believe the public would be impressed by what we're doing here," Cdr Pritchard adds.

"Overall, things in Iraqi waters have improved significantly. We're doing much less work here ourselves – fewer security boardings. The Iraqis are doing significantly more."

Argyll may be doing 'much less work' but that's comparatively speaking.

FOST lasted five months (count 'em). Deploying was almost a relief by comparison. The ship and her men and women have had no real break since May. They won't get one until they return to Devonport in April.

It is not all work, work, work, you know (although we'll spare you the recording of the CO performing karaoke, the images of towel wrestling, the sudden penchant for facial hair, and lots of grown men dressed as *Star Wars* characters).

And it's the simplest things which make a difference. Yes, there's e-mail and internet, satellite TV as well. But mail remains the most treasured creature comfort. Half a ton of it accumulated in Bahrain over ten days.

Other supplies come from Kuwait – notably fresh food. The chandlers do their best but some things just aren't the same.

Digestive biscuits are the essential accompaniment to the 10am cuppa. Only a local digestive is well, not really a digestive. It's a hybrid of a digestive and a Hobnob... "with the worst bits of both," as one disgruntled officer put it.

Still, mustn't grumble...



Our friends

WE CANNOT talk about operations in the northern Gulf without mentioning the ‘C’ word.

The Cornwall incident cast something of a cloud over RN life in 2007.

The media kerfuffle after Iran released the 15 sailors and marines it detained last spring doesn’t concern us here.

What does concern us is making sure our men and women are not snaffled by anyone again.

In the wake of the Cornwall incident, things changed out here. Some we can’t talk about, some we can.

And some you just cannot escape.

The beefed-up security on the ships – sailors manning machine-guns by day and night – is blatant.

And there’s no missing the two American patrol craft of Inshore Boat Unit 22 (or their .50 calibre guns fore and aft) which flank every boarding party patrol.

“We’ve tightened up on everything since Cornwall,” principal warfare officer Lt Cdr Paul Coverdale stresses (his CO calls it a ‘major scrub’).

“At the end of the day we’re going back to what we’ve

always done out here, but with much improved communication involved.

“I believe the chances of it happening again are very, very slim. We intend to send a clear message: they will not succeed.”

Argyll has a two-pronged boarding party: half a dozen Royals from the Fleet Protection Group are the fist, should it be required; half a dozen of the frigate’s ship’s company comprise the inspection team – by day they’re engineers, chefs (sorry, logisticians (catering services(preparation))), comms experts and so on.

The boarding party has undergone five weeks’ intensive training at HMS Raleigh, at Bickleigh and in the dunker at Yeovilton, plus some additional instruction from the FOST team.

The team is given a specific area in which to conduct its searches – the northern Gulf is parcelled into oddly-shaped boxes with top-secret (and rather bizarre) codenames (just one of the changes made post-Cornwall).

Dhows are the most numerous vessels out here, but it’s the tankers which generate the money.

After a sweep of each leviathan by a boarding party, the ship is then handed over to a security team from one of the platforms, pilots and tugs, who will guide the vessels in safely so they can begin hooking up to one of the two terminals.

The last time I joined patrols in the northern Gulf we were stopping Iraq smuggle oil out illegally. Today, we want that oil to flow incessantly, safely.

And it should. These are the most heavily-defended waters on this earth.

Such a proclamation can, of course, lay down the gauntlet to our enemies.

But it’s better to be the most heavily-guarded waters rather than the least heavily-guarded...

And the presence of this ring of steel – British, Australian, Singaporean and American warships, plus Iraqi patrol boats and US Coast Guard cutters, plus an aerial umbrella of helicopters and robot planes – has ensured there have been no attacks for almost four years.

And what are we safeguarding? Two weather-beaten lattice metallic structures which are usually partially hidden by the tankers parked alongside.

KAAOT (Khawr al Amaya Oil

Terminal) is the older, more ramshackle and less capacious platform, about a dozen miles off the Al Faw peninsula.

Half a dozen miles to the south is ABOT (Al Basrah Oil Terminal), more modern, more capacity, busier.

Between them they account for anywhere between 80 and 95 per cent of Iraq’s GDP depending on which statistics you read.

That probably doesn’t mean a lot to you. In simple terms, for every 40 barrels of oil sold across the globe, one comes from Iraq.

Now that might not seem like a lot, but lose this source of oil and that already expensive petrol at the pump will shoot up several pence.

We could, of course, live with that. Iraq could not.

“Without oil, there is no money and no reconstruction,” says Cdre Allan Du Toit, the Australian in charge of Task Force 158, guardians of the northern Gulf (he’s probably the only CO with an inflatable kangaroo in his ops room and the only one ever to call me ‘mate’ such is Antipodean familiarity).

In the past the task force – commanded in turns by Britain, Australia and the USA – has

been run from a major warship. Today, the group is run from portable cabins stacked on the concrete pillars of the KAAOT.

One day this command centre will be taken over by the Iraqis. One day. It’s the question journalists always ask. When?

“We’ve been out here for many years already,” says Cdre Du Toit, “and we’ll be out here for many years to come,” adding: “But there’s some real progress being made.

“It is a team effort. There are two or three major warships out here, six to eight Allied patrol vessels, Iraqi craft as well.

“It’s great to have the UK out here, especially Sir Bedivere. She’s indispensable to what we do.”

Besides being a floating forward training centre for the Iraqis, the last knight is home to two US IBU22 fast patrol craft.

Each day, those close support vessels are craned off the landing support ship’s deck – sparing them a 2½-hour transit to and from Kuwait (and up to seven hours each way for the Iraqis in Umm Qasr).

“Our job is to detect, deter, defend,” says Cdr Ted Leclair USN (his nickname, sadly, is ‘Mr L’, not ‘Chocolate’) IBU22’s CO.

“We do the first two very well.

We’ve not been called upon to do the latter yet – and that’s a good thing.

“I tell my folks that because we do such a great job, the terrorists go somewhere else, it’s too hard here. The men don’t see a threat – and that’s our biggest challenge, fighting boredom and complacency.”

Mr L’s detachment is one strand of the rather eclectic team crammed aboard Sir Bedivere: on a typical day 22 IBU22 men are based on the veteran vessel, alongside a handful of US Coast Guard boarding party experts, 50 Iraqi sailors and marines under training, 70 ship’s company, and a transient population of Australians, Brits, and Americans bound either for Bahrain or the northern Gulf.

“It’s quite a cosmopolitan atmosphere onboard,” says Capt David Buck RFA, Sir Bedivere’s Commanding Officer.

“I’m quite surprised by how well everything works together – the Coalition and the Iraqis. They bring a real enthusiasm to their job.

“Sir Bedivere’s in the last year of her service. I think she’s going out in a blaze of glory.”

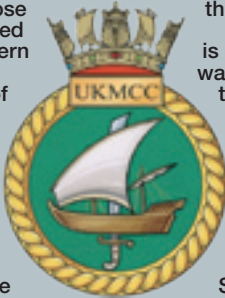
● Terminal presence... HMS Argyll (foreground) and RFA Sir Bedivere guard the ABOT oil platform



Here is the (good) news

GOOD news isn't news. Good news doesn't sell newspapers. Well, we're not here to sell. We're here to report. If we sell as well, so much the better. Invariably only the carnage and mayhem of another bomb blast in Baghdad, another seemingly senseless suicide attack makes the pages of the newspapers, the eye-catching headlines on the evening news. But the day in, day out work done in the northern Gulf? Zip. Nothing. Speak to anyone out here – Royal Marine, Naval Transition Team staff, Australian commodore, RFA skipper, American patrol boat captain and they all beat the drum. "This is a good news story," they say. And it is. Even a layman such as myself can see that. I can't speak for life on land in Iraq, but I can speak (a bit) for life at sea. Iraq's Navy and Marines have moved on in leaps and bounds since I last saw them (they have, refreshingly, somehow kept up that infectious enthusiasm). There remains a long way to go. The shorter term aim is to ensure Iraq's sailors and marines are ready for the new patrol boats to be delivered from Italy and Malaysia later this year. The longer term aim is to let

Iraq defend its own waters and shores as it once did. It is the legitimate right of any sovereign state. It is all too easy to focus on Iraq – we as much as any other media are guilty at times of being blinkered. But the mission out here goes far beyond those relatively confined waters of the northern Gulf. The domain of the UK Maritime Component Commander – currently Cdre Keith Winstanley and his staff – stretches from Suez to the shores of India, from the sandy coast of Iraq to far beyond the Horn of Africa. In all, it encompasses 2½ million square miles of sea. It is neither a benign environment nor one devoid of shipping. Far from it. "Around one third of the world's container ships and half the world's bulk cargo passes through the Indian Ocean," says Cdre Winstanley. "In this age of e-mails, global communications, fast jets, it's important to remember: 90 per cent of the world's trade moves by sea. "And there is still illegal use



of the oceans – smuggling, drug and people trafficking, weapons being moved." It is beyond the RN to stop such trade. It is beyond any one navy to stop this trade. But combine the forces of the world's naval powers – and that's the overarching mission here – and there's a chance. "For me, the Coalition is a success story. Navies want to join the Coalition," the commodore adds. "We are the second largest contributor to the force, but there are also Americans, Pakistanis, Australians out here, and the French, Germans. We've had the Japanese, the Singaporeans. And there are the regional navies too." That combined international police force has more than just maritime trade to protect. In the Gulf alone there are oil refineries and rigs, gas plants. And out here water is a commodity almost as important as the black stuff. The men who found Bahrain's first oil seven decades ago sought water, not oil. Many of the nations and cities on the shores of the Gulf rely on desalination plants for their fresh water. A terrorist attack on these

plants, an attack on ABOT or KAAOT, or an oil spill can threaten life out here (only recently the Coalition practised its response to such a spillage in Bahrain). The fragile nature of this region and its importance means it will remain the crucible of effort for the foreseeable future. "I see this as an enduring commitment for the Royal Navy," says Cdre Winstanley. "From a maritime perspective, we should be here. We're not the biggest contributor, but we bring a professional knowledge, specific skills, which are vital." As for Iraq, whose waters are a tiny fraction of the commodore's vast domain, the senior officer believes its navy is making "pleasing progress". He explains: "After the war in 2003, the Iraqi Army was beaten. But the Iraqi Navy was destroyed – not in the Second Gulf War, but the first one. "But in my 13 months out here, we've seen things change immeasurably. I don't underestimate the work that is left to do, but we're moving in the right direction. I regard it as a success story, a good news story." Next month: Organised KAAOT – life aboard Iraq's oil terminals



● (Above) Argyll's Flight Deck Officer guides a US Desert Hawk on to the flight deck and (below) a Desert Hawk approaches HMAS Anzac while the tanker Elephant waits for clearance to the oil terminals





Picture: CPO(Phot) Dave Coombs



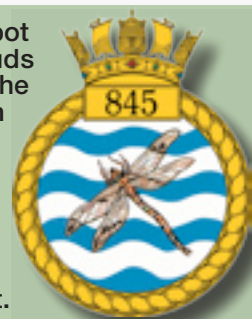
Picture: PO(Phot) Jim Gibson



Picture: LA(Phot) Paul A'Barrow

Desert

AFTER arriving in the hotspot of Iraq as war clouds broke in March 2003, the Jungle Sea Kings and airmen and women of 845 Naval Air Squadron have now bid farewell to Basra – the longest-serving helicopter squadron on Operation Telic has finally returned from the desert sands to the green lands of Somerset.



They have flown the equivalent of 82 times around the world or 20,000 flying hours.

They have spent three and a half years of the last five in the sand and heat of Iraq.

The Sea Kings of the squadron were loaded on to an aircraft to return to the UK on November 24, and with their departure the last of the airmen were ready to return home.

This is the first time for many years that the 185 personnel of 845 NAS have all been home for Christmas.

It's been a busy few years for this 'Jungle' squadron...

It was in January 2003 that the men and women of 845 NAS set sail from the UK for the Gulf as the pressure mounted for an end to Saddam Hussein's reign.

In the early hours of March 20 2003, nine Sea King helicopters lifted off from the deck of HMS Ark Royal as part of the first wave of the land offensive into Iraq – the raid on the Al Faw peninsula.

This onslaught was part of the largest helicopter-borne assault since the Suez Crisis.

The Commando Helicopter Force aircraft landed Royal Marines and combat troops into the dry landscape of southern Iraq, flying in darkness with Night Vision Goggles in appalling weather and under enemy fire.

As the Coalition troops pressed forward, 845 NAS moved with them providing tactical battlefield support all the way to Baghdad.

The squadron's home for most of their stint in Iraq was Basra International Airport.

Lt Ben McGreal said: "Accommodation and working conditions at the airport were initially very basic, but 845 NAS used our legendary 'Jungle' cunning – a title earned from our can-do approach during the Malayan conflict in the 1950s – to make best use of what was available.

"The searing heat of the following summer with temperatures rising to in excess of 50°C made life tough, the absence of running water and electricity made conditions even tougher."

The squadron returned home briefly in mid 2003, but it was back to Iraq in 2004, working with other units from the Joint Helicopter Command as Iraq rebuilt itself from the traumas of war.

Once again, 845 were called upon to move troops and supplies around southern Iraq, and to

provide top cover for the Coalition forces involved in strike operations against insurgents.

Throughout this time the Naval Sea Kings were the only medium-lift British maritime helicopter in theatre, so they maintained a vital supply line between the mainland and the Coalition ships in the northern Arabian Gulf.

"The most important and challenging role for the Sea King," said Lt McGreal, "was supporting the Immediate Response Team, or IRT.

"Working alongside medics from the other Services, the IRT provided the troops with life-saving casualty evacuation.

"The aircrew and medics were on 30 minutes notice to fly by day and night in order to treat casualties and transport them quickly to hospital."

Casualties could be the result of enemy attack, whether explosives or small arms fire, or accidents from any number of causes in the harsh terrain.

"Crews were often flying direct to areas under enemy fire, which meant that conditions for rescue were difficult and extremely dangerous – attacks against helicopters were a constant threat."

He added: "It was not unknown for the aircraft itself to be targeted by an improvised explosive device placed near to the initial incident.

"The ability to react swiftly and get casualties off the ground and back to proper medical facilities within the 'Golden Hour' was doubtless responsible for saving the lives of many UK Forces personnel, as well as foreign nationals and Iraqi civilians."

The 845 Sea Kings were called in for a total of 123 casualties during 2006, coming to the rescue of injured people in the most demanding of circumstances.

In early 2007, 846 NAS – the sister Sea King squadron within the Commando Helicopter Force – were put on readiness to deploy to Afghanistan, bringing their withdrawal from Iraq and increasing the demand on the Sea Kings and personnel of 845.

The squadron stepped up their commitment in Iraq, deploying on a tight operational rota of three months on, three months off – a testing time for the families back in the UK and the personnel meeting this high tempo on the ground.

Threats at Basra Air Station reached their highest levels since the start of the hostilities.

● (Top left to bottom left) A Night Vision Goggle shot of 845 NAS launching from HMS Ark Royal in the first hours of the invasion in March 2003

● A Sea King from 845 supports ground troops during the invasion of the Al Faw peninsula

● Looking out over the Iraqi desert from the Sea King cockpit



● On the final Sea King flight of 845 Naval Air Squadron in Basra, the remaining members of the detachment pose in front of the Sea King on November 17 2007

Picture: Cpl Ralph Merry RAF

jungle

“Between March and June 2007, 400 rockets were launched at the base – an average of five attacks a day,” said Lt McGreal.

“Maintaining our commitment, with aircraft sometimes being damaged during such attacks, severely tested the resolve of everyone involved.”

The final flight of the Sea King in Iraq took place on November 17 2007 with B Flight aircrew Lt Cdr Alex Stobo, Lt ‘Speedy’ Waugh and Sgt Lee James RM – Sgt James flew in the initial assault on the Al Faw peninsula almost five years earlier.

General Officer Commanding Major General G J Binns was waiting on the ground to greet both aircrew and groundcrew with a commendation to recognise the valuable work of the Sea King force during its many months in Iraq.

And so on November 24 the final aircraft was loaded up to be transported back to the UK and the last personnel from 845 were able to leave theatre.

“Since July 2006,” said Lt McGreal, “some members of the squadron have spent nearly a year away from their families and are very much looking forward to spending Christmas at home.”

But this is only a brief respite.

Even before it had finished in Iraq, the squadron had shifted

its focus and training to a new theatre – Afghanistan, where its sister squadron is now operating and to which 845 is bound in spring this year.

The cold snows of Norway call the squadron north this month for pre-deployment training in the extreme weather and mountainous conditions that will stand in good stead for the demanding environment of Afghanistan.

The aircraft are in the midst of a major modification programme and the 845 pilots need to familiarise themselves with a new generation of Night Vision Goggles and the new rotor blades that increase the performance and capability of the aircraft.

Cdr Matt Briers, commanding officer of 845 NAS, said: “845 are immensely proud to have performed such an important role in Iraq over the past five years.

“Above all this has been a team effort that has enabled the squadron to deliver the best possibly support to the Army in extremely demanding and dangerous circumstances.

“Personnel have served with real fortitude, distinction and omnipresent humour in the finest traditions of the Naval service.”

He concluded: “We now look forward to the fresh challenges of Afghanistan early this year.”

MEANWHILE as one Junglie unit leaves Basra, the airmen and women of 847 Naval Air Squadron have returned to the sand, dust and heat for the third time since the invasion of 2003.



This is the first time that the Lynx squadron of the Commando Helicopter Force have been equipped with six of the Army’s Mk 9 Lynx helicopters – the wheeled version of the Lynx.

Taking over from the Sea Kings of 845 NAS and the Lynx of 661 Squadron of 1 Regiment Army Air Corps, the squadron has now taken over the mantle of the IRT (Immediate Response Team) as well as troop-carrying duties.

The Lynx has been kitted out with a new surveillance device for its reconnaissance tasking.

Major Lenny Brown RM, commanding officer of 847 NAS, said: “Taking over the roles of the Lynx and Sea King detachments at this time is a significant opportunity for 847 as the capability we offer appreciably enhances the situational awareness of the ground units we are supporting.

“Our ability to cover a range of tasks from moving individuals and small teams about the province; to overflying and protecting ground convoys; to assisting in the seizure of illegal weapons will make a tangible difference to stability across the province.”

The atmosphere in Basra has calmed significantly with the recent cease-fire between key players, and Prime Minister Gordon Brown announced last month that the region would return to provincial Iraqi control.

The PM stated that the remaining British forces would focus on training the Iraqi military in the run up to a reduction of UK numbers down to 2,500 from the spring.

The Premier paid tribute to the quality and professionalism of the British Forces in his speech, saying: “Field Marshal Montgomery asked his troops, ‘What is the most important thing you have?’

“And he went round the troops and some said the kit, and that is important; some said the gun, some said all the equipment they had.

“Montgomery said to them: ‘No, the most important thing you have is you, your skill, your talent, your potential, everything that you contribute.’”

Meantime the air and ground crews of 847 steeled themselves for Christmas away from their families, yet ready for their emerging and established role.

- (Top right to bottom right) Brown out as dust flies for a Sea King landing in the Iraqi desert
- The Quick Response Force are picked up for an immediate response call by a Sea King of the Commando Helicopter Force
- The wheeled Lynx Mk 9 in use for the first time by 847 NAS now in theatre at Basra



● B Flight, the final flight crew, Lt Cdr Alex Stobo, Lt ‘Speedy’ Waugh and Sgt Lee James RM, who flew with 845 NAS on the raid on the Al Faw peninsula in March 2003

Picture: Cpl Ralph Merry RAF



Picture: LA(Phot) Paul A’Barrow



Far from an Illustrious episode...

I WAS delighted to see a large and comprehensive article about the recent activities of HMS Illustrious in December's *Navy News*.

However, I feel I should tell you that the main picture (p.23) is actually of HMS Ark Royal, although it is a very good picture none the less.

– Neil Watkin (former RNR),
Portsmouth

...ISN'T the carrier on p. 23 the Ark Royal?

– Fred Weeks
Er, yes. Hic semper erro... The picture is indeed Ark taken from *Illustrious*, so there is a link of sorts. Memo to self: read captions more thoroughly in future – Assistant Ed

The wonder of Woolies

COMMODORE John Torr writes about ships built to commercial standards (October) – they were the Liberty ship concept, US of course.

The 'Liberty ship' type vessel was an all-welded hull which was used for any type cargo – oil included – and in several cases were converted (adapted) to the escort carrier, troop carriers and landing vessels.

In those days they were known on the lower deck as Woolworth ships.

Liberty ships were wonderful vessels, seaworthy and reliable, and very adaptable.

– Steve Cooper, Public Officer,
Arctic Convoys Veterans-SA-Inc.
Huntfield Heights,
South Australia

Ideal holidays

THE China Fleet Club (UK) Charitable Trust holds about 60 weeks of top-quality holiday destinations exclusively for the use of non-commissioned personnel of the Royal Navy and their families. They are ideal for those returning from overseas deployment.

This is a non-profit-making scheme and our holidays can be seen at www.china-fleet.co.uk/holidays

– David O'Sullivan,
Chief Executive,

The China Fleet Club (UK)

Walking on water

AFTER my 24 years of service could someone, preferably from the PTI branch, explain why the senior service does not include swimming as an alternative to running a mile-and-a-half for the general fitness test?

Some of us would prefer to swim and swimming is better for the body.

One would have thought swimming would be more beneficial to the sailors' general fitness for life at sea.

Unless of course the sailor, like the "bish," may try to walk on water!

– The Rev Mike Brotherton,
Staff Chaplain to FOST,
Plymouth

JFK beat Truman

IT IS always dangerous saying anything is the 'first.'

HMS Manchester's deployment with the Harry S Truman battle group (*Navy News*, December) is not the first such attachment.

HMS Antrim was part of the Sixth Fleet, 'our' carrier was the John F Kennedy for a couple of months in spring 1972.

We had special US Navy communications gear fitted, and were fully integrated.

The US aircrews much preferred our aircraft direction, it was more positive than the USN's. On one occasion an F4 had a double engine flame out, his wingman called

"Bang out, Rusty!" which he and his observer did. Our

Wessex picked them both up. After that anyone in trouble was advised to "bang out!"

Transfers with US frigates

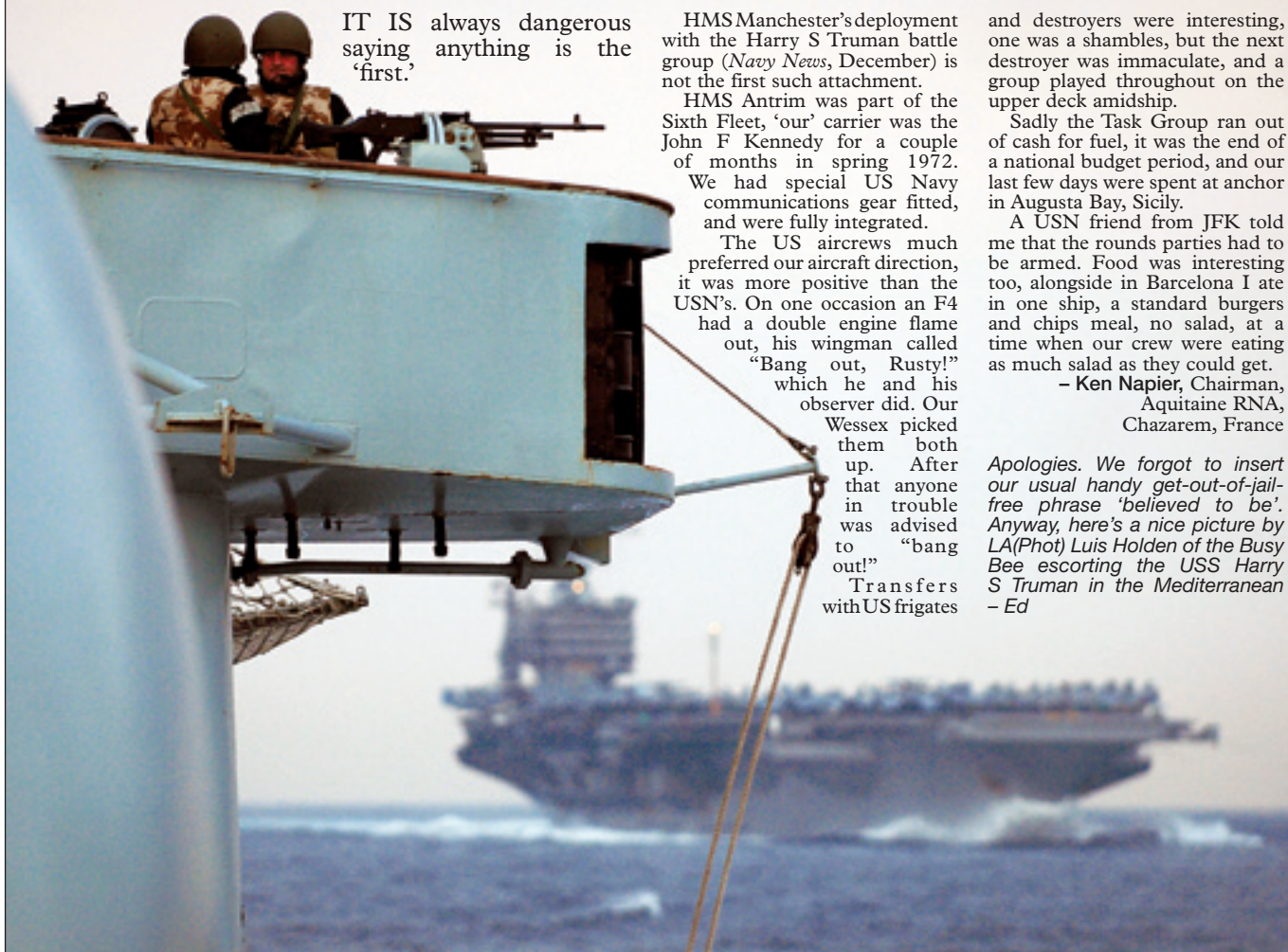
and destroyers were interesting, one was a shambles, but the next destroyer was immaculate, and a group played throughout on the upper deck amidship.

Sadly the Task Group ran out of cash for fuel, it was the end of a national budget period, and our last few days were spent at anchor in Augusta Bay, Sicily.

A USN friend from JFK told me that the rounds parties had to be armed. Food was interesting too, alongside in Barcelona I ate in one ship, a standard burgers and chips meal, no salad, at a time when our crew were eating as much salad as they could get.

– Ken Napier, Chairman,
Aquitaine RNA,
Chazarem, France

Apologies. We forgot to insert our usual handy get-out-of-jail-free phrase 'believed to be'. Anyway, here's a nice picture by LA(Phot) Luis Holden of the Busy Bee escorting the USS Harry S Truman in the Mediterranean – Ed



A Valiant attack

IN 1944 I was a torpedoman on HMS Valiant (pictured above in Malta in 1926), patrolling in the Pacific to stop all supplies getting to Burma, when we had to go back to 'Trinco' to do some work on the bottom.

The dock was brand-new and only one small ship had been in it, we went in about 10am and all was well. At about 8pm or 9pm, I was sitting in the mess playing draughts with my mate.

All at once the ship rolled over on her side. My mate and I were sent flying, all the lights went out and the small emergency lights came on.

We made our way along the gangways and up the ladders to the upper deck. It was pitch black. Then I saw something large coming at us, we ran out of the way and a large crane came running down the rails and into the sea.

I could then see the stern of our ship going into the sea, and

looking for'ard, I could just make out the bows of the ship, right up in the air.

A 36,000-ton ship was sticking at 90° and we were sinking into the sea. We could not do anything – if we went over the side we would still be in the dock.

We all stood there, waiting to drown, as we could see the sea coming up and there was nothing we could do.

Then all at once our ship broke away from the dock and came bouncing up to the top.

I went down to my mess, put my head on the table and went to sleep – I was out to the world.

The next morning I went up top to see. We had lost over 30 feet of our bow under the water, two of our screws and there was damage to our after deck.

I never from that day to this saw a word of this in any newspaper. Are there any more lads out there who remember it?

– D Bott, Redditch, Worcs

Don't forget Stalker

AT the end of the last century, many from the HMS Cavalier Association witnessed the terrible state of the former HMS Cavalier resting in a dock on the Tyne, deserted and unloved, with her ship boats hanging from the davits like bananas because someone had failed to take the bungs out.

Because of two failed lottery bids by South Tyneside Council, Cavalier was going to be sold to a theme park in Malaysia.

At the time, it was very hard to convince the powers-that-be of the need to preserve our maritime heritage, particularly those from WW2, and despite two enquiries into historic ships, they are still very much underfunded.

It was a great pleasure indeed, after years of work by the many volunteers, ably assisted by Chatham Historic Dockyard, to see HMS Cavalier in all her glory with the wonderful new National Destroyer Memorial alongside at the unveiling ceremony by the Duke of Edinburgh in November.

It has been a long time coming, but at long last HMS Cavalier can take her rightful place in history.

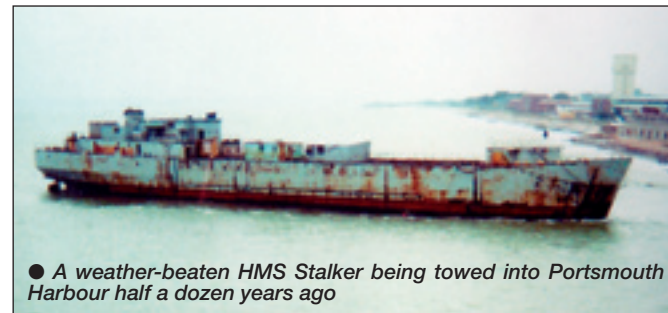
May I give my thanks to all those who have worked so hard to make the ship what she is today, and from those terrible days at Hebburn, where we watched her deteriorate daily. She is now a shining example of what can be achieved when there is the will to do it.

The Maritime Steam Restoration Trust are trying hard to save HMS Stalker, the last Landing Ship Tank (LST) which currently lies in Portsmouth – unloved and unwanted just like Cavalier was.

She too deserves her place in history – please give generously to this worthy cause.

– Sid Anning, Crownhill,

Plymouth
Donations for HMS Stalker can be sent to Fred Kinsey, Treasurer, Maritime Steam Restoration Trust, 94 Queen's Close, Harston, Cambridge, CB22 7QN – Ed



● A weather-beaten HMS Stalker being towed into Portsmouth Harbour half a dozen years ago



● Cdr Henry Duffy on the bridge wing of HMS Liverpool, the destroyer he commanded until last September

Following a fine officer

MAY I, as a WW2 veteran, thank you for your continuing interesting items.

Personally pleasing for me has been your coverage of HMS Liverpool and her CO, Cdr Henry Duffy.

I and my wife, Mary, had the pleasure and privilege of meeting this fine officer when he was designated liaison officer for us D-Day veterans at Portsmouth for the 50th anniversary.

What a splendid job he made of that task, always caring and considerate, which did not go unnoticed by us, the RN veterans and military veterans alike.

Like myself, many will have photographs of Lt Henry Duffy, as he was then, in their albums.

I have followed his progress in the years since with great interest, and our wish is that he will go on to greater things yet.

That day in June 1994 we met a real gentleman, and we will always remember it.

– Gerald Cooke,
Great Yarmouth, Norfolk

Pictures plea

CAN anyone help me find photographs of HMS Dryad and Nelson as they were in the 1960s?

I am writing a book about my time in the Navy – any royalties to the HMS Ganges mast fund.

– Tony Hurrell, 63 Trinity Rd,
Retford, Notts DN22 7QY
retfordrascal@hotmail.co.uk

Mystery block

DURING our 'Last of the Summer Wine' cycling tour in Belgium in October, my chums and I came across an enigmatic building, situated on the North Sea promenade about five miles west of Ostend. It appeared to be a residential block.

Does anyone know why it should be called Royal Navy?

– Cdr Kit Davidson (Retd),
Llanfyllin, Powys

Belfast's journey

HMS BELFAST was hit by a magnetic mine in Scapa Flow in 1939, and eventually arrived at Devonport, where she stayed for three years.

I'm interested in knowing how she made the journey – and by what route?

– Ken Buckingham

opinion

THERE'S nothing glamorous about patrolling the Northern Gulf.

Sailors work six hours on, six hours off, often for weeks at a stretch. The job demands a high level of alertness in monotonous and tiring conditions, a peculiar combination familiar to the military.

Like many repetitive jobs, it's a vital one, for on it depends the future prosperity and stability of Iraq.

That might not mean much to you or

The views expressed in Navy News do not necessarily reflect those of the Ministry of Defence

me, but in the most simplistic terms, it has a direct effect on the petrol prices at the pumps.

Yet how many motorists filling up with fuel at their garage forecourts are aware of the part the Royal Navy's played in getting it there?

Understandably, the media tend to concentrate on the visual and headline-grabbing stuff. Car bombs in Baghdad and suicide bombers make better pictures than routine ships' patrols

bringing down the smuggling and crime rates.

It's partly logistics – it's a long haul to get the media out there, and good news isn't usually news.

But the multi-national task force in the Northern Arabian Gulf is doing a difficult job very successfully.

It would be good to see this good news story getting due recognition, along with the work of the men and women out there.



Mandarins no match for Malaysians

I HAVE just received my Pingat Jasa Malaysia medal and I shall wear it with great pride along with my GSM and LSGC medals.

But I am disgusted with the attitude of our MOD and the Government of the day, for not allowing us who served in the "forgotten war" to wear it alongside our "issue" medals.

Furthermore, the PJM was in a beautiful presentation box, whereas my GSM was in a plain brown envelope.

Those civil servants in Whitehall ought to remember that it's we Marines, Navy, Army and Air Force that keep them in work.

— Ian 'Jock' Campbell RM (Retd), Southsea, Hants



● HMS Furious' Capt Arthur Talbot — described in the Philadelphia Record as "a former destroyer commander with a record for bagging U-boats" — and his cat Tiddles

The Philadelphia (Record) story

I MAY be able to shed a little light on the photo of Josiah Morgan, the "first blood donor" (Letters, November).

I gave blood at the same time and place and I remember they gave us a bronze donor pin.

We were refitting in Philadelphia until April 1942 and I think Mr Morgan's photo may have been taken by the Philadelphia Record, as I have the paper for October 15 1941.

It shows the carrier HMS Furious and our Captain, Arthur George Talbot, with his cat, Tiddles.

— Raymond Clifton, former CEA, Bicton, Western Australia



● How it used to be done... sailors aboard the pre-dreadnought HMS Lord Nelson fire a royal salute, as pictured by famous naval chronicler Stephen Cribb

In harm's way?

TWO images are burned in my mind from your December issue — HMS Lancaster's saluting guns crew (p.5) contrasted with the Royal Marine mortar crew (p.16) who are doing it for real.

Why does the Royal Navy project such wimpish images today?

The sight of the saluting guns crew dressed as if to endure some form of germ or chemical attack makes me sad. A ceremonial gun salute surely deserves ceremonial

dress, or at least No.3s.

I know what will follow this letter, a lot of nonsense about protecting the crews from any harm, this may be so, but what risk in a gun salute requires such overreaction?

I am afraid the image projected is doing the RN irreparable harm. Certainly it is no help in restoring faith in the Navy after the Gulf débâcle.

— K Miller (Eng Lt Retd), Plymstock, Plymouth

Memories more vivid than D-Day

LIKE Lt Cdr Alf Neil, (Letters, November) every November brings back memories of the landing on Walcheren to me — in fact it is never out of my mind.

I was a 19-year-old signalman on LCT 944. When I was 18, I was on the Normandy Landings, and landed the Canadians on Juno beach. I mention this because although it was in no way a pleasant landing and I still have memories, it is not so vivid in my mind as the Walcheren operation.

We landed the commandos at Westkapelle. All we could see from the bridge was the huge lighthouse that towered above the dykes. It stood well inland, I often wondered what the town looked like.

I was taken back this year by a good friend and my vicar on November 1. The town was totally destroyed at the time of the landing, but now is a lovely little seaside holiday town.

Behind the lighthouse is a little cemetery of 175 people of Westkapelle aged from 70-plus to a one-year-old who died on that day in 1944.

The townspeople hold three memorial services every year on November 1, one on the beach and one behind the lighthouse at Westkapelle, and one at Domburg.

There is a very good account written by Andrew Rawson in 1995 about Operation Infatuate in *Battleground Europe Guide to Walcheren* but he didn't cover everything — how could he?

On November 3 we left Ostend to return to the UK in a very rough sea, black as night at 3pm.

LCT 952 broke her back and we saved the crews — but there lies another story.

— Jack Bird, Tile Cross, Birmingham

LETTERS to the editor should always be accompanied by the correspondent's name and address, not necessarily for publication.

E-mail correspondents are also requested to provide this information.

Letters cannot be submitted over the telephone.

Given the impressive volume of

letters, we cannot publish all of your correspondence in Navy News.

We look particularly for correspondence which stimulates debate, makes us laugh or raises important issues.

Please try to keep your submissions as brief as possible — our space is limited.

The editor reserves the right to edit your submissions.



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Land-locked arbor master

STAFFORDSHIRE might be a long way from the sea, but the land-locked county can still boast an arbor master.

And the man in question is Charlie Bagot Jewitt, a former Royal Navy officer who now runs a very special arbor – the National Memorial Arboretum.

The 150-acre site was the brainchild of another Navy man, Cdr David Childs, who was inspired by Arlington Cemetery and National Arboretum in Washington DC.

With initial support from Gp Capt Leonard Cheshire VC, an appeal was launched in 1994, which won enthusiastic support from the Services and ex-Service associations.

Using reclaimed gravel workings situated within the boundaries of the National Forest and donated by Lafarge (formerly Redland) Aggregates on a 999-year lease, planting began in 1997.

The appeal matched a £1.8m Millennium Commission grant, which saw a visitor centre and Millennium Chapel opened.

It opened to visitors in 2001, and there are now more than 50,000 trees and 130 distinct memorials.

Those commemorated include those who have died on duty since 1945 (the Armed Forces Memorial, dedicated in October), Royal Navy warships (the RN Revue), the Merchant Navy, the Fleet Air Arm and the Royal Marines.

Reconciliation is also a factor in the site, and there are currently two ‘peace gardens’, those of the Dresden Trust and Japan.

The arboretum is not purely military, hosting memorials to



civilian groups such as the police, fire and rescue services, the Bevin Boys and the former GPO.

But there is a military hand at the helm, and Charlie Bagot Jewitt believes that his Naval career was ideal training for his current job as Chief Executive of the arboretum.

“I left the Navy in September 2005.

“I come from an old Staffordshire family, and I came back here to take over the family ‘pad’ – I felt after 22 years that I didn’t want to commute regularly to the South Coast, but I remain a Reservist.

“In due course this job came up, and it was only nine miles down the road, so it seemed ideal for me.

“I was in logistics in the Navy, and my last job was Staff Officer 1 Operational Logistics, part of Fleet staff but at Northwood – I suppose I am now compensating for two years ‘down the hole’.

“It is very much in my line – the estate management and management of people feels very much the same as being the pusser on a warship.

“And we are a very lean-manned staff – I think we are the equivalent of 12 full-time posts, with a lot of volunteers, so there is quite a lot of hands-on work.



● A shaft of sunlight breaks through at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month last year – proving a crucial design element of the new Armed Forces Memorial works, as the central wreath is lit up at the moment of remembrance

Picture: Craig Marston (RAF Cosford)

“There is also a need for the chief executive and directors to get out of the place to meet people and press the flesh.

“There is a certain amount of figureheading, which is necessary, but there are the other times as well – a week ago on Sunday I had to clean out the loos here.”

“It helps keep your feet on the ground.”

The official dedication of the Armed Forces Memorial took an enormous effort by Arboretum staff, the RBL and other organisations, including the Staffordshire Police, who mounted one of the biggest security operations in their history.

And the royal occasion put the site, near Alrewas, square in the

spotlight.

The hope is that more and more people will get to hear about the arboretum and visit on a day that is significant to them.

“It is a place for all-year-round remembrance, which you cannot do at the Cenotaph in Whitehall,” said Charlie.

“That is why the Royal British Legion took the site over in 2003.

“It is a fascinating job, watching the arboretum developing, seeing so many people coming here.

“Hopefully the site will develop over the centuries, and people can come back time and time again, because it will change from decade to decade.”

The site is worth seeing even if just for the imagination that has

gone into designing the gardens, monuments and memorials.

One of the most striking and poignant is Shot at Dawn, which stands at the eastern limit of the site, the first section to catch the rays of the rising sun.

Dedicated to the 306 British and Commonwealth soldiers shot for alleged cowardice or desertion in World War 1, the centrepiece of Andy de Comyn’s design is a larger-than-life statue of a blindfolded soldier, awaiting execution.

Facing him are six conifers, representing other ‘victims’ of the arrangement – those fellow Tommies ordered to carry out the sentence of death.

And behind him, in a patch of barren, weed-strewn ground,

are wooden stakes representing the executed men, each bearing a metal plate with brief details.

Another memorial which demands attention commemorates the Burma Railway, featuring around 30 metres of rails and sleepers from the infamous line which was transported to the UK from the Far East by HMS Northumberland in 2002.

Also retrieved from the Far East was the Lychgate from Changi jail in Singapore, built by prisoners of war in 1942 and shipped to the UK on the closure of the British garrison there in 1971.

For more details on location, opening times and facilities at the Arboretum, see the website at www.thenma.org.uk





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Fjord transit

● HMS Middleton transits Norwegian fjords on a navigation exercise with Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group 1

Pictures: Lt Rob Corcoran (HMS Middleton)

THE BALTIC, North Sea, the Channel – you name the waters and HMS Middleton will clean them up. With a little help from her friends, of course.

The Hunt-class MCMV (mine countermeasures vessel) has spent over four months as part of NATO's standing MCM Group 1, and got off to a busy start off Estonia.

Along with ships from Belgium,

the Netherlands, Germany, Poland and Lithuania, Middleton began with two minehunting operations in the Baltic, which proved fruitful in terms of ordnance abandoned by the combatants of two world wars.

A rare visit to St Petersburg to further NATO-Russian relationships was followed by a landmark ordnance disposal operation with Partnership for Peace nations near Lithuania, featuring vessels from 21 nations.

In October the NATO group moved out of the Baltic and into the exposed Channel waters of the Bay de Seine to remove explosives from valuable cockle fishery grounds and busy sea lanes.

The NATO force were joined by two French minehunters, and cleared eight pieces of ordnance, weighing in at

around 6.6 tonnes of high explosives.

Middleton briefly detached to have an engine changed at Portsmouth, then rejoined for a visit to Aberdeen, where the force marched through the city during Remembrance ceremonies.

The final operational leg took the group across the North Sea and into the splendour of the Norwegian fjords.

That meant a tough schedule for navigation trainee S/Lt Ben Kirkby, who plotted his way through the Norwegian archipelagos and fjords.

A weekend in Bergen allowed the ships to prepare for a week-long exercise, in which the NATO force, augmented by two Norwegian ships, policed the waters between two warring nations.

In falling temperatures, Middleton took control of the group to co-ordinate shipping throughout the area, providing a surface picture for the NATO ships and a deterrent to terrorist activities.

Despite 'attacks' by fast patrol craft and the threat of buoyant mines, the group achieved their objectives.

And for Diver Ed Maddy, the exercise brought the chance to dive on a Norwegian mine; he promptly attached an explosive charge and blew up the device, thereby providing a safe route for shipping and a spectacular water plume for the photographers.

The final exercise took place in Germany, with a week of air, surface and underwater threats to simulate the scenarios a NATO flotilla might expect in a UN peacekeeping role.

The exercise served to demonstrate how well the force had knitted – such groups are designed to promote a high degree of interoperability, teamwork and the sharing of specialist expertise.

Middleton's CO, Lt Cdr Steve Holloway, picked up the keys to the ship just two days before she deployed in July.

"Having worked with a multinational task force for over four months now, we are confident in our ability to clear vital areas of historic ordnance that still presents a danger to today's mariners," said Lt Cdr Holloway.

"We have also proven we can turn our hand to most situations through a developed understanding of one another's methods."

After a quick shopping stop at the Christmas market in Lübeck, Middleton headed back to her home base of Portsmouth for maintenance.

Her place will be taken this month by sister HMS Hurworth, and the UK also takes control of the group, with HMS Roebuck acting as command ship.

Hurworth will certainly be up for the task, as she has just received the James Acton Mine Warfare Efficiency Award for the consistently high level of her performance during her autumn 2006 solo deployment to the Mediterranean, when she conducted warm-water trials with Type 2193 sonar.

The award was created in memory of Lt Cdr James Acton, a mine warfare officer who was killed in the Golcuk earthquake in Turkey in 1999.

Rear Admiral David Cooke, Commander Ops, presented the award to the ship's CO, Lt Cdr Andy Woolhead, and also presented the Marine Engineering department with a Herbert Lott Efficiency Award for the "top to bottom professionalism and dedication" shown during and after the ship's maintenance period.

● The NATO mine countermeasures force steaming down Lysefjorden in formation during a navigation exercise, with command ship BNS Godetia in the foreground

● A buoyant mine is detonated by RN diver Ed Maddy. HMS Middleton's dive boat can be seen at the left of the plume



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'ONCE NAVY, ALWAYS NAVY'

Modest branch steps into limelight

ONE of the "typical bread-and-butter" branches has celebrated its 50th anniversary.

Bromsgrove branch, based in the small Worcestershire market town is a modest operation – but feels it is time to step into the limelight for a moment.

Branch vice chairman S/M Gordon Mayling said: "We do not make headlines as do some of the larger, more wealthy branches, nor do we enjoy the glamour of a maritime location.

"But we do strive to carry on in the best traditions of the RNA by supporting ex-Service charities where we can, encouraging the local Sea Cadet Corps and perpetuating that special spirit of camaraderie we discovered so many years ago on mess decks around the world.

"We are not a young branch – in fact, our octogenarians outnumber our septuagenarians by more than two to one."

The average age amongst the 37 members is 79, with the oldest member being almost 91.

But, said S/M Mayling, there is still the matelot sparkle, and a nucleus of dedicated volunteers to keep the branch functioning and provide a lively social programme.

Branch chaplain the Rev Wendy Moore is the daughter of a Royal Navy man, and is thus familiar with RN tradition and loves to get involved whenever she can.

The branch maintains close links with the Bromsgrove and Redditch Sea Cadet unit TS Kingfisher, and in 2000 members instituted the Millennium Shield, to be presented annually to their Cadet of the Year.

Redruth is in demand

MEMBERS of Redruth and Camborne branch have been travelling far and wide for Remembrance services in the South-West.

First up was a social event and two minutes' silence at the Conservative Club in Camborne.

Parades were attended by members at nearby locations where wreaths were laid.

The branch's two standard bearers, S/Ms Dave Kennedy and Bob Saxby, were much in demand at parades, concerts and other activities connected to the Remembrance period.



● Darby Allen, Windy Gale and Gerry Harris with Col Tajiri Alwi at the medal ceremony in Portsmouth



● Joining in with the sea shanty sing-along are the reunion organisers with the CO of HMS Warrior, from left, Mike Ellis (ex-POPT), Warrior CO Cdr Ken Jones, secretary Danny du Feu (ex-L/Sea-Boats), and Bill Melvin (ex-LPT), the 2009 reunion social secretary

Pictures: Tina du Feu (ex-Wren Phot)

Eagle and Pickle

AN 'OLD Navy' contingent of the HMS Eagle reunion party and the Portsmouth Wavy Navy Re-enactment Society stopped the traffic when they took to the streets of Portsmouth.

The party, dressed mainly in nautical period costumes, marched from their traditional gathering at the Maritime Club in a platoon some 80 strong straight into Victory Gate to join the Pickle Night festivities on board HMS Warrior.

Security guards on the gate were bewildered when five Nelsons marched past them.

The HMS Eagle Last Commission Reunion Party came together from all corners of the UK to celebrate the 35 years since serving together and the Eagle paying-off.

On boarding the Warrior, and after the initial photo-call, the lads and their guests joined other parties and were treated to a tot of rum or mulled wine, while touring the ship.

Dinner was piped, and the beef was paraded past seated guests on the Gun Deck, with the entertainment beginning with the ship's crew, followed by sea shanty music from the Shep Woolley Band.

One of the highlights of the

evening was the formation of a very long conga up and down between the decks – all in all, a memorable evening.

The ex-Eaglets met up with others who couldn't make it on the night at noon the next day for a reception and meet-and-greet at the Duke of Buckingham pub in Old Portsmouth.

The reception was well attended, with large photographic displays of the ship as well as memorabilia, depicting her life as a strike carrier to her demise in the ship breakers in Scotland.

The display also caught the eyes of all present, with the many photographs of the crew at work, in their messdecks, and on runs ashore.

Reunion organisers Mike Ellis and Danny du Feu had, after initially contacting known shipmates, decided to organise this reunion following requests from ex-shipmates and earlier, smaller, get-togethers.

Membership secretary Danny said that following this year's success, the next reunion weekend is scheduled for Spring 2009, with a venue to be confirmed.

He urged all ex-Eaglets to get in touch, even if not on the last commission – all would be very welcome.

One matelot who missed this year's do, and will hopefully make the next, was Cyril Knott, an ex-MEM on Eagle's first commission in 1952 – at 82, Cyril



● Between the guns on the Gun Deck, singing Land of Hope and Glory, are, from left, Wally Nangle (ex-L/Sea RP2), with Fred Bristow (ex-LOEM), and Ted Crozier (ex-PO/Sea(TAS)) in the background

was recovering from surgery in Plymouth.

The main organisers will be joined by Bill Melvin (ex-LPT) who takes over the role of social secretary for next reunion.

Contact details are: Mike Ellis, mobile 07828 683966, email slovpro@hotmail.com or Danny

du Feu, mobile 07891 660715, email danny@ddf-photography.co.uk

Medals presented

FORMER St Vincent boys were among those who were presented with their Malaysian campaign medals at a ceremony in Portsmouth.

The Pingat Jasa Malaysia medals were awarded by the state of Malaysia to all Servicemen and women who took part in the campaign to protect the sovereignty of Malaya from rebellion by Communist insurgents during the conflict between 1957 and 1966.

An investiture was organised at the Royal Maritime Club, at which the Malaysian Military Adviser to the UK, Col Tajiri Alwi, presented medals to some of those who took part in the campaign.

Among those who attended were Malcolm Smith, Ernie Smith, Gerry Harris, Ken McIntosh, Darby Allen and Windy Gale.

Around 400 veterans from all three Services attended the ceremony in Portsmouth.



● Cdr Tim Peacock with World War 2 veteran Leonard Pullman

If the cap fits...

A WORLD War 2 veteran was thrilled to be invited to take part in a commemoration service when HMS Monmouth visited New Zealand.

So much so that 86-year-old Leonard Pullman, who served in HMS Leander (later HMNZS Leander) during the war, donned his original 1940s uniform to make sure he looked the part.

Deep's attend Cheshunt dinner

TWO serving submariners were among the guests at the Cheshunt branch gala dinner dance.

Along with the Mayor and Mayoress of Broxbourne, Cllr Charles Tranham and his wife Monica – both of whom have close associations with the branch – MEM John Hanks, of HMS Turbulent, and SA Ben Gibson, of HMS Victorious, joined the 120 guests at the Halsey Masonic Hall.

S/M Carl Bateman was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation for his help in branch matters.

The Ron Joy Trophy, named in memory of the branch's former chairman, and the Shipmate of the Year Award went to S/M Dave Stocker.

Dave has suffered significant health problems over the past two years, losing the use of a leg, and his mobility is limited.

Although in a wheelchair, he has continued to attend meetings and the Sea cadet unit TS Intrepid, where he is an instructor.

Gifts were also given to a number of ladies who work hard on the social aspects of the branch – S/Ms Janet Stocker, Marion Joy, Margaret Morsley, Peggy Hare, June Triggs, Vera Everest, Wendy Smith, Alison Owen and Jenny Wilsher, and also to the branch padre, Rev 'Mother Jane' Dicker.

Stay in the picture

ROYAL Navy photographers are planning a social weekend in Portsmouth for the summer.

Ex- and serving photos are invited to the RN Photographers Association bash at Whale Island (HMS Excellent) from June 6-8.

A programme of events will be published shortly, but highlights of the weekend will include the Saturday Night Party, with live band and disco and a barbecue buffet.

For further details and tickets, please contact membership secretary Danny du Feu on 07891 660715, email danny@ddf-photography.co.uk or write to 57 Westover Road, Leicester LE3 3DU.

Naval Quirks



Time machine – pages 12-14

Service held in prison

CROSBY branch was invited to an unusual Remembrance Day service, which was held at HM Prison Altcourse.

The service was attended by 13 members of the branch and the Merseyside Submariners branch, and both had standards on show.

Around 40 prisoners from the prison attended, and many inmates had donated part of their pay to buy a poppy wreath.

In total £150 was raised by prisoners – which also provided donations to the Royal British Legion and the RNA.

Following the service prisoners and branch members chatted over tea and biscuits.

Following the service the prisoners' wreath was taken to a local cemetery, where it was laid on the graves of sailors lost in HMS Barham in 1941.

The graves are maintained by prisoners on day-release from the prison.

Radio Merseyside presenter Linda McDermott was among the guests at the Crosby branch Trafalgar Night dinner, which was attended by 120 people.

Linda was also asked to become a patron of the branch, to which she agreed.



● The Duke of Edinburgh chats to standard bearers at the dedication of the National Destroyer Memorial in Chatham Historic Dockyard. Seven standards were present, representing the associations of HMS Cavalier, HMS Cassandra, HMS Cossack and HMS Caprice, the 8th Destroyer Flotilla Association, the 8th Destroyer Association and the RNA National Standard.

Music to the ears of Two Trees regulars

CUSTOMERS and staff at the Two Trees public house in Plymouth raised £1,723 for the Plymouth branch at a karaoke competition.

Paul Murphy, an ex-Royal Marine, and his wife Sonia have been licencees of the pub, in Union Street, for 15 years, and regularly hold fund-raising events.

Plymouth branch chairman

S/M Bob Palmer, who is a regular at the pub, said he was delighted to add the sum to the charitable donations that will be made by the branch to deserving Service charities at the end of the year.

On behalf of branch members S/M Palmer thanked Paul, Sonia and staff and regulars at the pub for their enthusiasm and support.

Window honours the Commandos

MEMBERS of the York branch were surprised and pleased in November 2006 when one of their colleagues, S/M Bernard Hallas, was invited to be guest of honour at the Remembrance parade in Clyde Naval Base.

If he thought that was a final accolade, he was wrong – because November 2007 saw him heading north of the border again, this time to Glasgow, for the unveiling of a new stained glass window in memory of Royal Marine Commandos.

Bernard, an ex-Corporal in the Royal Marines, had been invited to the Clyde in 2006 by Col Paul Denning, the Commanding Officer of the Fleet Protection Group RM, who had been impressed by the unit padre's description of Bernard's Service history.

This time round it was the new CO, Col Richard Spencer, who invited Bernard as a guest.

Escorted by second in command

Lt Col Mark Maddock and padre the Rev Mike Hills, Bernard made his way to one of the most impressive of the Church of Scotland's buildings, the Cathcart Old Church.

After a short but impressive service, during which the Royals of Clyde Naval Base received the thanks of the Rev Neil Galbraith for their charitable support of the Cathcart community, Bernard's big moment arrived.

A gentle tug on the corner of a large White Ensign allowed it to float down, revealing a magnificent stained glass window.

The bulk of the window comprises a Celtic cross and incorporates shades of the Corps colours.

A brass plaque in remembrance of all RM Commandos who died in the service of their country since the end of World War 2 lay at the foot of the window.

This, said Bernard, had to be his greatest moment – and, "without doubt", his final accolade.



● The Rev Mike Hills and S/M Bernard Hallas at the unveiling of the memorial window

Chingford and Waltham Forest closes

CHINGFORD and Waltham Forest branch is to decommission at the end of this month.

Chairman S/M Jeff Button has written to the Association to say the branch will close on Sunday January 20, and a laying-up service will be held at St Edmund's Church, Chingford, at 4pm.

They will then return to the Royal British Legion in Hall Lane to celebrate the branch's 21 years.

Any branches interested in joining them should contact S/M Jeff at 3 The Retreat, Brook Road, Buckhurst Hill, Essex IG9 5TT, by January 10.

The RNA Club at Luton and Dunstable is also to close, ceasing trading on December 31 2007, due to rent rises at the property.

The Luton and Dunstable branch continues as normal, but will meet at a different venue.

Branch round-up

WARWICK branch and Warwick town council are to dedicate a tree at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire in memory of the loss of the wartime ship which shares their name.

The destroyer, launched in the final year of World War 1, was sunk by U-boat on February 20 1944 with the loss of 67 men.

It is hoped an official dedication ceremony will take place this spring.

Organisers would like to hear from anyone who served in HMS Warwick at any time who would like to attend the ceremony.

Contact either branch chairman A J Coles at 41 Coventry Road, Warwick CV34 5HN or Town Clerk Derek Maudlin, Mayor's Parlour, The Court House, Jury Street, Warwick CV34 4EW.

MORE than 30 St Vincent boys took part in the Remembrance ceremonies in London.

This was the first time members of the St Vincent Association have been invited to take part at the Cenotaph.

The association was formed in 1996 and has more than 650 members around the world.

All have served at HMS St Vincent in Gosport between 1927 and 1968.

MARKET Harborough marked the 25th anniversary of its foundation with a celebratory supper.

Founder member S/M Connie Halsall talked of the formation of the branch and the people who originally attended – current social secretary S/M Mike Petch was another member who was at the original meeting.

Branch round-up

£50 PRIZE PUZZLE



THE mystery ship in our November edition (right) was RFA Pearlleaf.

The winning entry was from Hilary Collett, of Dunstable, who wins our £50 prize.

This month's long-serving frigate (above) began life as a sloop and saw plenty of action in World War 2, including Norway and North Africa, and was involved in the sinking of at least two U-boats.

She later became a radio trials ship for the Admiralty, ending her days (after steaming more than 400,000 miles) in a Tyneside scrapyard in 1959.

Can you name her? The right answer could win you £50.

Complete the coupon and send it to Mystery Picture, Navy News, HMS Nelson, Portsmouth PO1 3HH. Coupons giving correct answers will



go into a prize draw to establish a winner.

Closing date for entries is February 15. More than one entry can be submitted, but photocopies cannot be accepted. Do not include anything else in your envelope: no correspondence can be entered into and no entry returned.

The winner will be announced in our March edition. The competition is not open to Navy News employees or their families.

MYSTERY PICTURE 155

Name

Address

My answer



● Members of the RNA and RMA pay respects at the grave of Capt George Downey in Ontario in 2003

Plattsburg pilgrimage

A MEMBER of the Southern Ontario branch in Canada was interested to read the report of the Battle of Plattsburg in the December edition of Navy News.

S/M Chris Shellard said in 2001

and 2003 the branch went by bus to the town for parades and to help re-enact the battle.

In 2003 members marched to the grave of Capt George Downey to pay their respects.

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Heroics in the line of fire

WHILE his green beret comrades were locked in mortal combat with the Taliban (*see page 3*), Cpl John Thompson was shaking hands with Her Majesty in the sumptuous surroundings of Buckingham Palace.

A veteran of a good 30 fire-fights with the Afghan insurgents, the heavy weapons specialist of 42 Commando headed to London to receive the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross for repeated displays of bravery during a six-month tour of duty in Helmand a year ago.

Like most brave men, the 29-year-old commando was rather more nervous about meeting the Queen than grappling with the Taliban.

“It was a massive shock to be given this award – and it feels great. It was an absolute honour to meet the Queen and to shake her hand. It’s top of the pops. I was absolutely nervous – and anyone who knows me knows that I don’t get nervous,” said John (*pictured above with his medal by PO(Phot) Nicola Harper, CTC RM*).

“But I’m just one bloke who got a medal. Everyone else put in just as much as I did.”

Of the numerous engagements the marine was involved in during his tour of duty in Helmand, one particularly vicious scrap with the insurgents near the town of Gereshk lasted four hours.

“We assessed there were about 60 Taliban attacking us from all directions,” John recalled. “Ten minutes into the fire-fight, my ear drums blew due to the intensity of the machine-gun fire. For the rest of the battle, I couldn’t hear and my ears were bleeding, but we carried on fighting.”

The 2006-07 deployment was the corporal’s third time in Afghanistan and by far the most exhilarating time of his career – and also the most rewarding.

“We patrolled areas looking for things we could do to help the local people – such as getting clean water, tools for farming,” he explained.

“One minute we’d be doing humanitarian work, winning hearts and minds, the next we’d be in offensive action, really persecuting the Taliban. I could hammer the target with heavy machine-guns, javelin missiles, grenade launchers, and also request artillery support.”

Meanwhile, John’s Commanding Officer Lt Col Matt Holmes, awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his service in Afghanistan, formally opened the refurbished Medal Room at the Royal Marines Museum in Eastney.

The room has undergone an overhaul lasting almost a year, vastly improving the way in which the medals won by men of the Corps through the centuries can be viewed by visitors.

The medals have been cleaned, re-mounted and placed in more logical groups, while new lighting shows them to better effect and the accompanying text is much easier to read.

The museum is home to 8,400 medals awarded to Royal Marines, included all ten VCs won by the Corps.

Some of the medals now on display have never been seen by the public before and, for the first time, visitors have access to information about all the medals in the collection through state-of-the-art touch-screen ‘kiosks’.



● *Pan people... Flames of passion from PO(Chief Steward) Dave Bovington on his way to victory as RN Senior Chef of the Year*

Picture: LA(Phot) Gregg Macready, FRPU Whale Island

Dave’s kitchen d’or

NAVAL chefs and stewards – or logisticians (catering services (preparation) and (delivery)) as they now are – battled against the odds in the annual test of military prowess in the kitchen, the Combined Services Culinary Challenge.

Sandown Park racecourse in Esher was once again the setting for this cook-off and although Royal Navy and Royal Marine numbers were depleted thanks to demands on personnel across the globe, the Senior Service team of chefs and stewards, drawn from the Navy, Royal Marines, RFA and civilian contract personnel, scooped a goodly handful of medals and certificates.

The three Forces do battle across numerous disciplines, vying for accolades such as Senior Chef of the Year, Open Cook and Serve, Junior Lamb, Novice Decorated Cake and many more classes in both cookery and ‘front of house’ skills.

Among the RN triumphs was victory in the prestigious Inter-Services Open Team Buffet event with a ‘best in class’ Silver Medal.

The team now moves on to represent the Combined Services Culinary Arts Team at Hotelympia next month.

Other ‘best in class’ awards were snapped up by Marie Conn (Sodexho, CTCRM) for open centrepiece; LLogs(CS) Steve Pascoe (HMS Vanguard) for best front of house; Logs(CS) Charlotte ‘Charlie’ Boyce (HMS Westminster) for open hot sweet; LLogs(CS) Wayne ‘Rocky’ Champs (HMS Montrose) for senior steward restaurant flambé; C/Sgt Stewart ‘Nutty’ Edwards (42 Cdo) for open show plated banquet dessert; and Logs(CS) Erica Tarr (HMS Ocean) for novice open pasta dish.

The two most coveted prizes in Senior Service chefery (*made-up word – Ed*) were snapped up by HMS Westminster’s PO(Chief Steward) Dave Bevington, RN Senior Chef of the Year and, for the second year running, Logs(CS) David Hambly of HMS Vanguard, Junior Chef of the Year.

“This is the second year that I have had the honour to head this team and I am enormously proud of the way in which everyone worked together and supported each other both in the training leading up to the event and then throughout the three days of competition,” said team director Lt Cdr Mel Melville-Brown.

“Everyone worked long hours. We had a really small team compared with the Army and RAF but team spirits were excellent and we gave a very good account of ourselves.

“Sadly not everyone went away with an award this year but I am hopeful that they have been bitten by the bug and that we will see them back next year.

“I have been so impressed with some of the new talent that is beginning to come through – several of our novices won ‘best in class’ awards.”

The overall competition for the Challenge Trophy was won comprehensively by the Army with ten Blue Riband event points against the RAF (last year’s winners) on five points and the RN on four.

Southampton’s out of Africa

NEARLY nine months after departing the Solent, HMS Southampton finally came into view of Round Tower in time for Christmas.

The destroyer left these shores on April 23, bound for the Falklands.

But her lengthy deployment offered so much more than simply sailing around the remote outpost of Empire.

Her tour of duty began in earnest on the other side of the Panama Canal with a series of international exercises in the Pacific.

The core of the deployment

– four months in all – was, however, spent in and around the Falklands, as well as their even more isolated dependant South Georgia.

We last caught up with the ‘Mighty Ninety’ (as the ship now likes to be called) in Cape Town.

Since then she has made her way up Africa’s west coast, visiting Lobito in Angola – a pretty infrequent port of call for Her Majesty’s warships – and



Lagos in Nigeria.

In between there was a chance for hands to bathe near to the Equator and, unlike HMS Nottingham (*see page 2*), there was no sign of Jaws to ruin the occasion.

In all, the ship has clocked up 33,000 miles and visited 14 foreign ports.

“The technical, logistical and human factors of operating a warship thousands of miles from the UK for eight

months are considerable,” said Southampton’s CO Cdr Richard Morris.

“The success of the deployment is a credit to the professionalism and dedication of the men and women who serve as Southampton’s ship’s company.”

They and their ship now enjoy a break before the destroyer undergoes some maintenance following her South Atlantic exertions.

● *Southampton manoeuvres off the Falklands shortly before leaving the islands*



Whitehall apologises for Joe’s death

ROYAL Marine Joe Tindall died because of a calamitous fuel leak in an aged aircraft.

The 22-year-old green beret was one of 14 people killed when an RAF Nimrod surveillance aircraft caught fire and exploded above Afghanistan in September 2006.

The venerable jet had just completed refuelling with a Tri-Star jet high above Kandahar when fire broke out.

For the next six minutes, the official report into the tragedy records, the crew struggled to extinguish the flames while the flight deck team tried to land the aircraft at Kandahar airbase.

The Nimrod exploded before they could do so, around 1,000ft above Kandahar.

The Board of Inquiry report into the crash blames a combination of the aircraft’s age, faulty maintenance and the lack of a fire detection and suppression system for the disaster.

Defence Secretary Des Browne publicly apologised for the tragedy and said lessons had been learned.

Mne Windall had been in the Corps for three years at the time of his death. He specialised as a signaller and communicator.

Focus on photos

AN EXHIBITION of images has opened in Plymouth, parading the work of some of the Navy’s finest photographers.

The photos of PO(Phot) Sean Clee, who holds the title RN Photographer of the Year 2007, can be seen alongside images by his comrades LA(Phot) Dave Sterrat, highly commended in *The Times* and AA-sponsored Landscape Photographer of the Year 2007 competition, and LA(Phot) Chris Winter – all regulars in the pages of *Navy News* (although Sean laments the paucity of our front covers featuring his photographs).

Sean spent his Peregrine Trophy winnings from his photography award on a trip to Kenya where he photographed dramatic landscapes and exotic wildlife to provide 20 pieces for this new exhibition.

Sean said: “It’s great for me, Chris and Dave to have the chance to show off our work like this in the Royal William Yard.

“This is the first public exhibition that I have put together and it is a bit daunting, as you never know what people will think of them. I am looking forward to seeing my pictures in such a big space.”

The three photographers’ private work – a rare glimpse into their talents beyond the usual Naval images featured in this paper – is on display at the Masavision Gallery at the Royal William Yard in Plymouth.

Turbulent time

ROUGHLY one third of the ship’s company of HMS Turbulent left their boat behind and headed up the M5 and M6 to Warrington, their affiliated town.

The submariners knuckled down to numerous activities during their four-day visit, planting trees as part of a local youth project, a ten-pin bowling match hosted by the local council, a visit to the town’s Sea Cadet unit, TS Obdurate.

The cadets grilled the Turbulents on life aboard a nuclear hunter-killer boat as well as general life in the Senior Service. The evening cemented the future careers of several cadets.

On a more solemn note, participation in Warrington’s November 11 ceremonies.

The deeps were joined at the Remembrance ceremonies by Sea, Army and Air Cadets, the emergency services and troops of the Duke of Lancaster’s Regiment, before being entertained by Penketh and Sankey Royal British Legion.

Deaths

Capt John Ronald Gower. Entered Dartmouth 1926 and pre-war he served in cruisers and battleships. Took part in the evacuation from Dunkirk in minesweeper Albury before joining the converted merchant ship *Mytilus* (Op Lucid); then CO of destroyer *Winchester*; CO of Swift (1943-44), part of the 23rd Flotilla of British and Norwegian ships (Arctic Convoys); on D-Day, rescued 80 men from Norwegian destroyer *Svenner*; Swift was sunk by an acoustic mine; awarded a DSC. Joined the destroyer *Orwell* and in 1945 took part in Op *Stellbinder* off Norway, twice mentioned in dispatches. After the war he served as course officer at the RN College, Dartmouth; 2iC of the training cruiser *Devonshire*; then commander of the RN College, Greenwich (1951-53); Director of the Navy's PT school at Portsmouth 1954-55. At short notice he took command of the destroyer *Diana* and ordered to test the effects of a nuclear attack (Ops *Mosaic I* and *Mosaic II*) off the Monte Bello Islands, west of Australia, and later campaigned for proper medical care and compensation for the men and their families. After serving as naval attaché in Santiago (1958-60) his last posting was as captain of HMS *Ganges* (1960-62); he retired after 36 years service. November 17. Aged 95.

Roy Tapping. Stoker. Served in Tenby 1944-46 and a founder member of HMS Tenby (J34) Association; also the combined J34-F65 Association. October 10. Aged 81.

Bill Carlisle. Survivor of HMS *Mashona* which was bombed after returning from the sinking of the German *Bismarck*. Tribal Association.

McMurdo Culbert. AB. Served 1943-46 in *Ganges*, *Pembroke*, *Nimrod*, *Osprey*, *Rocket*, *Sennen* (ex US Coast Guard Cutter), October 11 in Ontario, Canada. Aged 82.

Simon Wallis. Aircraft Handler. Served 1948-50; initial training at Royal Arthur; he joined *Implacable* then transferred to *Illustrious*. Mentioned in Dispatches for attempting to rescue a pilot from a burning aircraft on the flight deck; he was one of 21 survivors from the *Pinnacle* that foundered in Portland Harbour in 1948. Demobbed from Heron. HMS *Illustrious* Association and also on the Southern Branch Committee. Author of *74 Not Out*. October 12.

Ray 'Geordie' Hudson. AB. Served 1959-70 in Falmouth (1963-66), Lion, London and Duncan. November 22. Aged 69.

Henry 'Harry' Williams. CPO. Served 22 years in the RN; two years in the Mediterranean before the war and was invalided out in 1946 after catching polio whilst in the Azores in 1944. October 2.

Peter Hann. AB. Served in Cheviot 1947 and a member of the association. November.

ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION

Neville Woodhouse. Served in Ajax, Tadoussac and Chequers. Soham and District branch. October 28. Aged 84.

W F 'Jim' Baulcombe. L/Signalman. Served 1942-46 in Loyal and at St Angelo. Vice president Warwick branch. November 7. Aged 84.

Thomas William Pope. AB. Served 1935-50. Ships included battleship *Royal Sovereign*. West Malling branch. October. Aged 87.

Ken Greenway. L/S. Served 1949-58 including *Korea*. Scarborough branch. Aged 76.

Robert 'Bob' Cammish. Seaman. Served 1944-50 in Royal Naval Patrol Service; then Merchant Navy and locally as auxiliary coastguard and lifeboat service. Scarborough branch. Aged 81.

Walter 'Wally' Cregg. AB. Served 1941-47 in Combined Operations on LCTs in the Mediterranean and at D-Day. Newark branch. October 29. Aged 84.

Don Simmons. Served in Queen's Royal Hussars and Merchant Navy. Associate member *Thurrock* branch. November 20. Aged 77.

George Sutherland. RO. Founder member of South Liverpool branch. September 26. Aged 65.

Frederick Charles Beales. Beccles branch. November 16. Aged 81.

Ellis Bailey. Air Mechanic FAA at Nightjar. Chairman and former PRO of Bolton branch RNA, also former chairman Bolton Sea Cadets Committee and secretary of Bolton Combined Services Association. November 20.

Henry Samuel 'John' Johnson. Air Mechanic 1st Class. Joined RN 1946 and served in *Barbarra*, *Hornbill*, *Gosling* and other ships and establishments in Far East. Dagenham branch. October 27. Aged 80.

Thomas 'Tom' Pope. AB. *Ganges* boy 1935. Served in *Royal Sovereign*, and *Queen* (wartime aircraft carrier), *Maidstone* and *West Malling* branch. October 21.

Peter 'Pusser' Hill. Fleet Master at Arms. Served 1958-84 in *Lowestoft*, *Belfast*, *Ashanti*, *Antrim*, *Illustrious* and shore units; *Ganges*, *Osprey*, *Rooke*, *Raleigh*, *Sultan*, *Heron*, *Caledonia* and *Nelson*. Founder member and chairman of Eastern Cyprus

branch. October 2. Aged 65.

'Ted' Maccrossen. LM(E). Served in *Glendower*, *Imperieuse*, *Pembroke*, *Cockatrice*, *Bleasdale*, *Truelove*, *Owen*, *Alaunia* and *Campania*. *Gatwick/Crawley* branch. November 16. Aged 79.

Leslie Hewson. Ldg Seaman. Served 1942-46 in *Ganges*, *Pembroke*, *Dinosaur*, *Hamilton*, *Cobra*, LCTs 344, 3779, 1156 and *Indomitable*. *Cheshunt* branch. August 18. Aged 84.

Keith Sherman. Associate member *Cheshunt* branch. October 18. Aged 60.

David Wood. Army. Associate member *Cheshunt* branch. May 25. Aged 78.

Arthur Reginald 'Dusty' Miller. Attended *Holbrook* School and became a boy seaman at *Ganges* in 1939; drafted to *Pembroke* and later to *Naiaid* as Leading Seaman *Gunnery LR2* surviving her torpedoing in 1942; also served in *Vallant*, *Malaya*, *Monck Sanderling* and *RNAS Abbotsinch* taking part in Arctic Patrols, Convoy 'Tiger', Battle of Crete, Red Sea Convoys and invasion of Italy at Salerno. Joined *Chelmsford* branch 1960 and served as branch president from 1990-93; made a life member in 1996 becoming branch vice chairman 2005. November 28. Aged 83.

ASSOCIATION OF RN OFFICERS

Lt Cdr K G Barnard VRD RNVr. Served: Mignonette and Dahlia.

Lt Cdr J B Barton. Served: *Marvel*, *Albion*, *Ark Royal*, *Anzac*, *Centaure*, *Sea Eagle*, *Hermes* and *Berry* Head.

Capt M A Hemans DSC. Served: *Ajax*, *Berwick*, *Mauritius* and *Chivalrous*.

Capt H R Hewlett. Served: *Sardonyx*, *Obdurate*, *London*, *Paladin*, *Cygnat*, *Terror*, *Saker* and *Welcome*.

Lt Cdr A H E Hood. Served: *Woolston*, *Totland*, *Indefatigable*, *Hobart*, *Warramunga*, *Ocean*, *Dryad* and *Cochrane*.

Lt Cdr R M Jenkins. Served: *Ramilles*, *Ilex*, *Nile*, *Onslow*, *Woolwich*, *Victory*, *Dalrymple*, *Adamant* and *Dolphin*.

Capt D Jermain DSC. Served: *Newcastle*, *Badger*, *President*, *Manners*, *Solebay*, *Peacock*, *Jamaica*, *Lagos*, *Victory*, *Rothsay*, *Raleigh* and *London*.

Cdr C A O'Riordan DSC. Served: *Danae*, *Keppel*, *Volage*, *Chequers*, *Merlin*, *Mercury*, *Africkander*, *Phoenicia*, *Hermes* and *President*.

Lt J M R Phipps. Served: *Newcastle*, *Bastion*, *Cook* and *RN Air Stations Lossiemouth* and *Yeovilton*.

Cdr H A Strange. Served: *Daedalus*, *Ariel*, *Salisbury*, *Stadacona*, *Fulmar* and *Victorious*.

Lt Cdr J H C Sykes. Served: *St Vincent*, *Proisher*, *Collingwood* and *Centaure*.

Lt Cdr D R G White RNR.

ALGERINES ASSOCIATION

A W John Sainsbury. Sto/Mec. Served in *Circe*. July 14. Aged 81.

Alan Millington. AB. Served in *Skipjack*. October 13. Aged 83.

Chas E Clapton. Tel. Served in *Lioness*. October 22.

Robert Horne. AB. Served in *Chameleon*. November 12. Aged 81.

Maurice Butters. Sto. Served in *Mutine*, *Rowena* and *Moon*. November 16. Aged 80.

Malcolm Gibson. Canteen Manager. Served in *Spanker*. November 25. Aged 82.

LST & LANDING CRAFT ASSOCIATION
A D Severs. Served with LCA Flotilla 466 and LSL(L) Empire Mace. November.

P J Blee. Served LCT 645. October 2.
W S Turner. Served with LCV Flotilla 1, LCE Flotilla 132 and LST 412. November 10.

SUBMARINERS ASSOCIATION

J 'John' Byrth. PO SA. Barrow branch. Served 1969-90 in *Walrus*, *Onyx*, *Opossum* and *Upholder*. Aged 58.

M 'Morry' Clary. LRO. Colchester branch. Served 1955-64 in *Talent*, *Seneschal*, *Springer*, *Thule*, *Toten* and *Tiptoe*. Aged 70.

R 'Ray' Hedgecock. L/Sto. Merseyside branch. Served 1944-45 in *Osiris*. Aged 87.

A T 'Aubrey' Johnston. ERA3. Dolphin branch. Served 1948-51 in *Artful*, *Anchorage* and *Amphion*. Aged 81.

T J 'Trevor' Leyshon. AB AA3. Welsh branch. Served 1943-45 in *Sea Nymph*. Aged 84.

R A 'Scrubber' Manning. Sto. Mech. Leicestershire branch. Served 1953-57 in *Talent*, *Seneschal*, *Teredo*, *Alcide* and *Ambush*. Aged 75.

Cdr D P B 'Paddy' Ryan. Dolphin branch. Served 1959-90 in *Grampus*, *Sea Devil*, *Narwhal*, *Olympus*, *Odin*, *Ambush* (CO), *Narwhal* (CO), *Onslow* (CO), *Sovereign* and *Renown* (CO). Aged 70.

J A 'Jack' Wilkinson. MID. Sto. PO. Leicestershire branch. Served 1940-45 in *Tuna*, *Regent*, *P346*, *Vivid*, *Oberon* 1 and *Proteus*. Aged 87.

Tom Whitehead. CPO OEL. Served 1953-75 in *Trump*, *Trenchant*, *Tudor*, *Anchorage*, *Token*, *Oberon* and *Narwhal*. Gosport branch. November 13. Aged 72.

Peter Gordon Matthews. Served in submarine *Aeneas* during the first Gulf War. Submariners Association. November 11.

Reunions

JANUARY 2008

HMS Illustrious Association: Annual Service of Remembrance at St Mary's Aldermar, Bow Lane, London on January 31 at 1305. Contact Alf Garton on 01395 266577.

MARCH 2008

Chief Naval Engineer Officers: The 2008 conference will be held in HMS *Collingwood* on Mar 6-7. The annual RN Engineers' dinner will also take place on March 6 with Admiral N G F Guild presiding as CNEO. All serving and retired RN and RNR engineer officers, warrant officers and officers of Commonwealth and other navies who are currently in engineering appointments in the UK are eligible to attend. For more details and information contact Lt Cdr J Pugh by email mws-tt-oicwve@nrta.mod.uk, tel: 01329 332198 or write to CNEO Conference Secretary, Room 9, 529 Building, HMS *Collingwood*, Newgate Lane, Fareham, Hampshire PO14 1AS.

RNXS (East Anglia Group): Annual reunion will be at the Shipwreck, Shotley Marine (ex-Enwright Block, *Ganges*) on March 30 from 12:00 to 15:00. Contact Peter Brooke, 7 Penn Close, Capel St Mary, Ipswich, IP9 2UE or tel: 01473 310189.

APRIL 2008

HMS Courageous Society: Reunion at the Holiday Inn Hotel, Newcastle Airport, April 4-6. Details and application for membership from the secretary M W Pitkeathly, 28 Home Park Road, Saltash, Cornwall, PL12 6BH or see the website at <http://www.hmscourageous.co.uk> or tel: 01752 849326.

HMS Black Prince Association: Reunion at Dauncey's Hotel, Weston Super Mare, April 25-28. Excellent programme planned, and former ship's company, associates and friends are welcome. Details from William Edge at edge.william@sky.com, tel: 0161 775 9136 or write to 8 The De Traffords, Dalrymple, Adamant and Dolphin.

HMS Glory 1943-56: Reunion at the Savoy Hotel, Bournemouth, April 25-28. More details from Tom Stallard by email at margaretstallard@yahoo.co.uk or tel: 01303 256457 or write to 18 Sandwich Close, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 3QG.

MAY 2008

815 Squadron: Planning a party for May 9 to celebrate 50 years of rotary aviation on the squadron. Details from S/Lt N Marshall at 815ops2@yeovilton.mod.uk or tel: 01935 456756.

HMS Gambia: Mini reunion at the Royal Hotel, Whitby, North Yorkshire, May 9-12. Details from Les Newman, 3 Coppice Road, Whitnash, Royal Leamington Spa, CV31 2JE. The list for this reunion closes on December 26.

RN Engineerroom Association: 16th annual reunion, May 16-18, at the Nautical Club, Birmingham. Details from Bob Styants at bobstyants@btinternet.com or tel: 0121 422 4115.

HMS Widemouth Bay 1944-57: 12th reunion and AGM at the Angel Hotel,

Ask Jack

HMS Bigbury Bay: In 1950-51 Bigbury Bay, travelled 1,000 miles up the Amazon, from Belem to Manaus. Can anyone confirm that this was the first warship to have gone that far on this river, and second has there been a British warship since to have gone up this river? Contact John Woodman at jwoodman.lancing@virgin.net or write to 30 Fifth Avenue, Lancing, West Sussex, BN15 9QA.

HMS Boadicea: Lost off the coast of Devon, June 13, 1944 with a great loss of life. Twelve members of the crew survived, rescued by HMS *Vanquisher*. Does anyone remember this action or Geraldine's late father, Eric John Tucker? Contact Mrs Geraldine Brooks, 15 Marlhurst, Marlipit Hill, Edenbridge, Kent, TN8 6LN.

Borneo 1964-65: Seeking information regarding Claret Operations and Naval Parties Kilo and Lima. Contact Susan Taylor, 34 Shooters Way, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG21 5PN.

HMS Cambridge: Seeking the whereabouts of the ship's bell of HMS Cambridge, Wembury Point, Plymouth, after her closure. If you can shed any light, please contact Robert Roe-Stacke, The Lodge, Queen Alexandras Court, St Mary's Road, Wimbledon, SW19 7DE.

HMS Nubian: Did you know Alfred 'Fred' Hewitt? Served *Ganges*, *Pembroke*, *St Christopher*, *Aggressive*, *Attack*, *Nile* (Mosquito, Canopus, Nubian), *Calliope*, *Caroline*, *Reaper* from 1942 to 46. His son, Steve, would love to learn more about the naval life of his late father. If you can provide any information please contact Steve Hewitt at s.hewitts@ntlworld.com or tel: 07974 235937.

Swap drafts

LET(ME) Swift. Current draft: HMS *Illustrious*. Would like to swap for: any Portsmouth-based ship other than CVS or LPD. Contact: 305-lmem3@a.dii.mod.uk.

NOTICEBOARD ENTRIES

■ Notices for this page should be brief, clearly written or typed and addressed to – The Editor, Navy News, HMS Nelson, Portsmouth. PO1 3HH or email: edit@navynews.co.uk. If you are sending your notice in via email, please include your full address and telephone number.

■ Reunions appear in date order, and requests to place an entry in a particular edition cannot be guaranteed.

■ Please send in Reunions at least three months (preferably four) before the month of the event.

■ There may be a delay before items appear, due to the volume of requests.

■ Entries are free to non-commercial organisations. Items pertaining to commercial work, books and publications for profit can only appear as paid-for advertising.

■ The Editor reserves the right to edit or refuse publication of submitted notices.

■ Space does not allow us to accept more than one free insert. Any subsequent notice will have to be paid for at advertising rates.

Leamington Spa, May 16-17. All former shipmates welcome. Contact: Reg Moss at reg@regmoss.orangehome.co.uk, tel: 01784 440047 or write to 38 Lansdowne Road, Staines, Middlesex, TW18 1HQ.

HMS Wave Association: 17th annual reunion will be held at the Legacy Chesterfield Hotel, Chesterfield, May 28-29. Further details from Ken Wardle (secretary) at hmswave.association@yahoo.co.uk or tel: 07914 029760.

JUNE 2008

RN Photographers Association: Calling all Photos. Ex and serving Photographers are invited to attend a fantastic social weekend at Whale Island (HMS *Excellent*), Portsmouth, over June 6-8. There will be a programme of events that will be published shortly, but the highlight of the weekend will be the Saturday night party with live band/disco and BBQ/buffet. For further details and tickets, contact membership secretary, Danny du Feu at danny@ddf-photography.co.uk, tel: 07891 660715 or write to 57 Westover Road, Leicester, LE3 3DU.

FAA Buccaneer Association together with 892 Squadron Association will hold a weekend reunion to mark the 30th anniversary of the last Buccaneer and Phantom Squadrons to be decommissioned from the FAA. It will be held at the Royal Court Hotel, Keresley, June 27-29 with a special guest performance from Shep Woolley. Details from Dave Clark at daclark@faaba.org.uk, 01935 474862 or visit www.faaba.org.uk.

JULY 2008

D-Boats Association: Reunion in the WO, SR and SNOs mess, HMS Nelson, Portsmouth on July 5-6. If you would like to attend or require more information about the association, contact Mike Smith, at dboats@tiscali.co.uk, tel: 01553 765530 or write to 206 Main Road, Clenchwarton, Kings Lynn, Norfolk, PE34 4AA.

SEPTEMBER 2008

HMS Gambia: AGM and reunion at the New Birchfield Hotel, Weston Super Mare, September 19-22. You can take a look at the website: <http://www.hmsgambia.com/socialsecretary.html>. Details from Les Newman, 3 Coppice Road, Whitnash, Royal Leamington Spa, CV31 2JE.

OCTOBER 2008

Safety Equipment & Survival Association: Reunion will be held at Bosworth Hall, Market Bosworth, Warwickshire, October 16-18. Please contact Gordon 'Pixie' Parkes at gordon.parkes@ntlworld.com or tel: 01483 823181.

HMS Illustrious Association: 25th anniversary reunion at the Russell Hotel, Weymouth, October 17-20. More information can be obtained from Mrs Ann Lefley, 3 Hailsham Close, East Preston, West Sussex, BN16 1DW.

HMS Triumph: Reunion at the Auckland Hotel, Morecambe, October 17-20. Contact Len Allen for details at navtot7@aol.com, tel: 01992 710854 or write to 489 South Ordnance Road, Enfield, London, EN3 6HT.

Contact sheet

Ministry of Defence: 0870 607 4455, www.mod.uk

Royal Navy recruitment: 0845 607 5555, www.royalnavy.mod.uk

Veterans Agency: 0800 169 2277, www.veteransagency.mod.uk

Medals enquiries: 0800 085 3600

RN and RM Service records: 023 9272

7531 or 023 9272 3114

Falklands 25: 0800 169 2277 (Veterans Agency), www.falklands25.com

Royal Naval Association: 020 7352 6764, www.royal-naval-association.co.uk

RNBT: 023 9269 0112 (general), 023 9266 0296 (grants), www.rnbt.org.uk

British Legion: 08457 725725, www.britishlegion.org.uk

RN Community: www.rncom.mod.uk

Naval Families Federation: 023 9265 4374, www.nff.org.uk

SSAFA Forces Help: 0845 1300 975, www.ssafo.org.uk

Royal Naval Museum: 023 9272 7562, www.royalnavalmuseum.org

Fleet Air Arm Museum: 01935 840565, www.fleetairarm.com

Royal Marines Museum: 023 9281 9385, www.royalmarinesmuseum.co.uk

RN Submarine Museum: 023 9252 9217, www.rnsubmus.co.uk

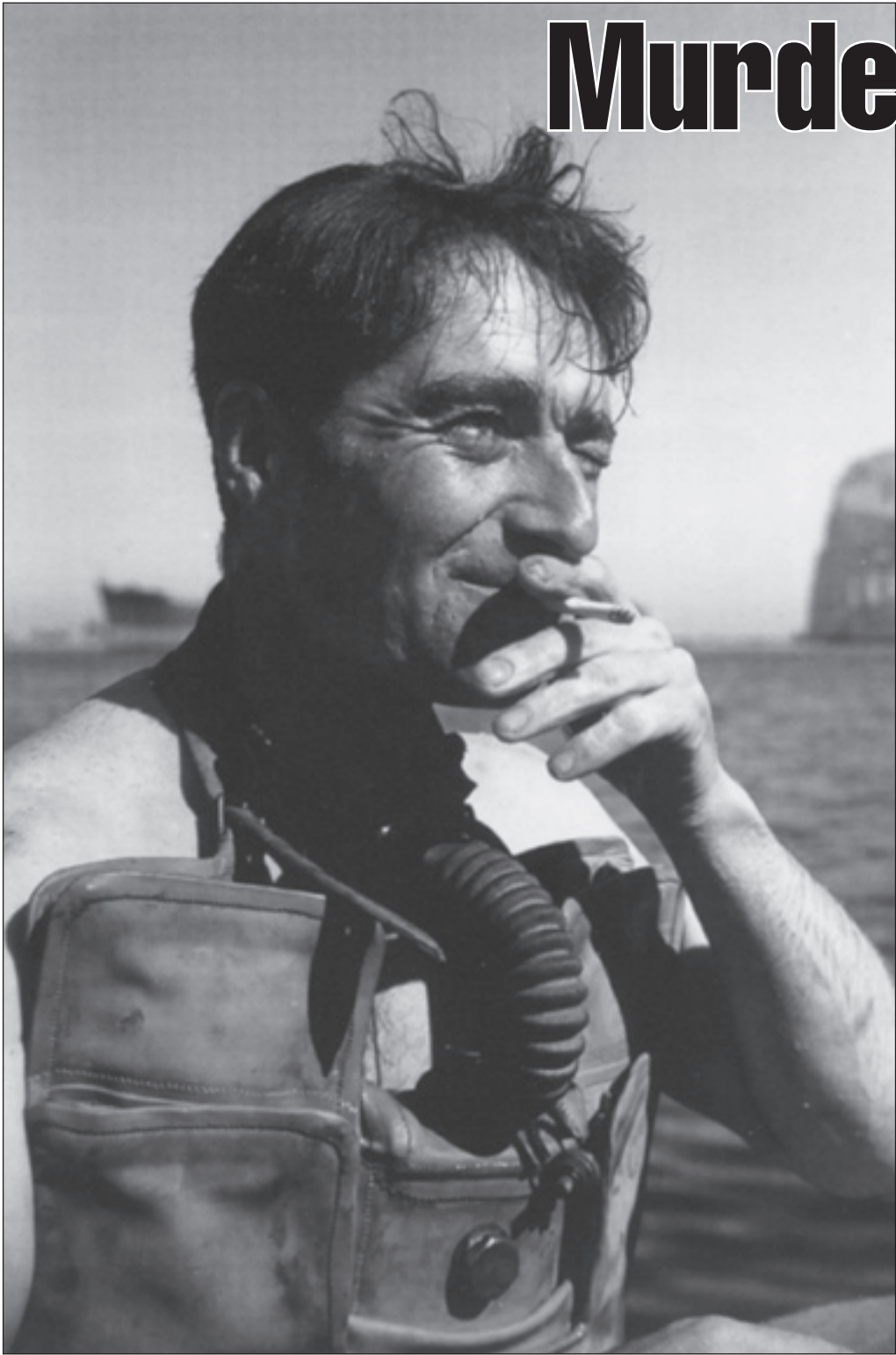
National Maritime Museum: 020 8312 6565, www.nmm.ac.uk

Imperial War Museum: 020 7416 5320, www.iwm.org.uk

Sports lottery

November 17: £5,000 – NA(AH)2 G D Booth, Culdrose; £1,500 – Lt J O'Neill, Scott; £500 – AET C P Richardson, Sultan.

</



Murdered by Moscow?

CERTAIN subjects are guaranteed to produce a bulging postbag at Navy News.

Just Nuisance. Simon the Cat and HMS Amethyst. Wartime pot messes.

And then there's the fate of Lionel 'Buster' Crabb, doyen of the diving community.

Crabb's death/disappearance on a dive in Portsmouth Harbour one April morning in 1956 has been the catalyst for conspiracy theories as varied – and wild – as those surrounding the deaths of Princess Diana, Marilyn Monroe, President Kennedy and Elvis.

And still, as Don Hale laments in his exhaustive *Final Dive: The Life and Death of 'Buster' Crabb* (Sutton, £19.99 ISBN 978-0-7509-4574-5), we're not quite ready to tell the full story of the officer's life.

For many files on the 'frogman affair', as then premier Sir Anthony Eden called it, remain firmly under lock and key – and will stay that way until 2057.

But what official papers there are have been mined by the author – an investigative journalist who campaigned for years to overturn the conviction of 'Bakewell tart killer' Stephen Downing.

Papers and documents tell only part of the Crabb story.

Hale has also interviewed numerous RN divers of the era, including Crabb's closest companions, family members, and senior officers to fill in the rest.

And 'the rest' is a remarkable

story. Attention invariably focuses on that fatal final dive, but for a decade and more before 'Buster' Crabb was arguably Britain's most famous frogman.

He owed his reputation to natural ability as a diver and a fearless nature which bordered on the reckless.

He made his name as a clearance diver in Gibraltar and, later, Italy.

Contemporaries found him difficult to get on with, lazy, prone to smoking and drinking, and lacking the slightest interest in the technical side of diving.

'Buster' Crabb was, however, "quite brilliant underwater".

Such brilliance ensured Crabb remained in demand post-war.

He searched for the wrecks of sunken submarines Affray and Truculent. He explored a sunken Spanish galleon. And he found himself increasingly wanted by MI6 and Naval Intelligence for covert missions.

One such mission was a dive – the final dive – on the Ordzhonikidze, a Soviet cruiser bringing Khrushchev to Portsmouth in 1956.

Twelve months before Crabb had successfully inspected the hull of another Red warship, Sverdlov.

Crabb never returned from his inspection of the Ordzhonikidze. He was 47, unfit and using complex – and dangerous – diving kit.

So what happened to Crabb? There's still no conclusive proof (only last month a former Russian sailor claimed to have killed the British officer in an underwater

scrap as Crabb tried to place a mine on the cruiser) but Hale makes a compelling argument.

The dive on the Ordzhonikidze had nothing to do with the ship, he says. It was a CIA/MI6 mole hunt to discover the extent of Communist infiltration in British and American security services.

And so 'Buster' Crabb was sacrificed by the country he served loyally.

He was, argues the author, "probably murdered" by Soviet spies – possibly tipped off by traitor Anthony Blunt. "Someone could easily have tampered with Crabb's equipment," writes Hale – the diver had complained of problems with the kit before finally vanishing.

When the story of Crabb's disappearance emerged in the papers it provoked diplomatic outrage.

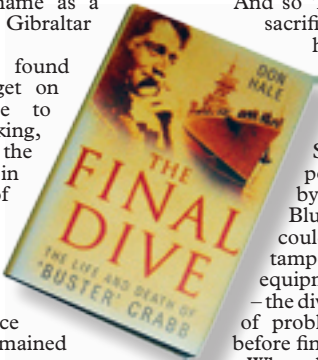
Eden was incandescent with rage. He had expressly forbidden any dives on the Russian cruiser. The Admiralty – chiefly First Sea Lord Mountbatten – ignored him. So too the intelligence services.

'Rogue' intelligence services and secret plots have long been the backbone of thrillers and films. In 1956, fiction became fact.

Indeed, with the hindsight of half a century, it's clear that 'Buster' Crabb was one more victim of the great espionage game played out between the superpowers.

But until the British and former Soviet archives disgorge *all* their information, we'll never enjoy the complete story of his final dive.

'Til that day, this book is as close as we'll get to the truth.



● *The legendary 'Buster' Crabb pauses for a cigarette during clearance work in Gibraltar in 1944*

Picture: The Final Dive/IWM A23270

Chart success

THE HISTORY of seafaring is a huge topic and Donald Johnson and Juha Nurminen have produced an equally huge book.

The authors' strengths are in the history of navigation upon which they self-consciously concentrate.

Johnson has sailed across the Atlantic no less than five times in his self-built schooner and has practical experience of using ancient navigational instruments.

Nurminen has made his wealth in modern cargo handling but has used this to support his research and collecting in the history of navigation.

Nurminen's eponymous Foundation has funded and co-published this handsome volume – *The History of Seafaring: Navigating the World's Oceans* (Conway, £40 ISBN 9781844860401) – but it is much more than a vanity publication, writes Prof Eric Grove of the University of Salford.

It is a finely-illustrated and comprehensive history of navigation from the earliest times to the present day, fully worthy of publication in English as well as Finnish.

The authors are admirably global in their approach and begin with the union of Captain Cook's western navigation skills in the Pacific with those of Tupaia a great master of the Oceanian navigational tradition.

Tupaia was able to use his techniques to lead Cook through the Society Islands and the waters off New Zealand and Australia before he sadly succumbed to disease in what is now Jakarta.

They then go on to describe the 'seafarer's natural world' of winds, tides, weather and stars in which the problems of location and navigation have to be solved.

The chronological history of the evolution of navigation begins with chapter three, which covers the early Egyptian voyages to East Africa through those of the Phoenicians to the shipping achievements the Greeks and Romans.

The book clearly demonstrates that any idea of a 'flat earth' was firmly destroyed by the ancient Greeks. This spherical earth idea was kept alive by the Byzantines and the Arabs, a continuity that overcome the superstitions of the Western Christian era and combined with the latter's own developments (notably the 'Portolan' chart) to produce the navigational advances of the Renaissance era.

There is also coverage of parallel developments in northern waters, largely associated with the Vikings, as well as of the achievements of the Chinese until their withdrawal from the global maritime world in the 15th Century.

The contrast of a massive Chinese 'treasure ship' with a contemporary European vessel is most marked.

The Grove Review

It was lucky for the Europeans that the Chinese then turned in upon themselves. 'Globalisation' could have taken a very different turn.

The story then moves on to what actually did happen, the crucial voyages out into the Atlantic made by Portugal and Spain.

The discovery of the 'new world' of the Americas is covered very well. Columbus clearly was always ambivalent about what he had found – although he never ruled out his discovery of new territories for his Spanish masters. 'America' is indeed well named as it was Amerigo Vespucci who explored the eastern coast of South America and established a new continent was there to be partitioned between Portugal and Spain.

The book then examines the work of the theorists of this key period, notably the Fleming Gerald Mercator who invented the best way of representing the spherical earth on a flat surface. It then moves on to the attempts to find a north west passage from Europe to China and the first circumnavigations of the earth by Magellan and his subordinates (the leader of the voyage died in the Philippines) and Francis Drake.

The story continues as Royal Navy officers like Anson and Cook vied with others such as Bougainville to extend navigational knowledge around the globe.

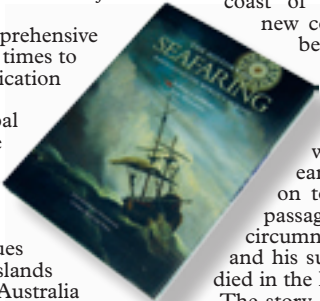
The account moves on to cover 19th-Century developments in meteorology, oceanography, natural history, ship magnetism and Arctic and Antarctic exploration; in all of which the Royal Navy played a major part. A final coda brings navigation into the electronic age.

The knowledge of the authors in their main areas of expertise seems sound enough but when they spread themselves over ship developments in extra 'boxes' added to the text their grasp is less secure.

The illustrations remain as beautiful as ever but, for example, the brief account of the evolution of the galleon (a much-contested but vitally-important subject) is weak to the point of being wrong.

Care must therefore be taken with the some sections of this work but, in general, there is probably no better or more accessible introduction to the book's subtitle *Navigating the World's Oceans*.

The History of Seafaring is excellent value in all ways and does its main subject more than justice. It is a very admirable volume and is recommended both as a good and informative read and a much better than average addition to the coffee table.



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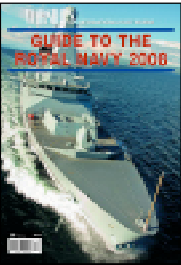
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EDUCATION

The Best Start In Life



Lynx look at The lure of Lomond

Rookesbury

THE PEACE of the idyllic surroundings of Rookesbury Park School in Wickham was shattered in November by the unmistakable roar of a Lynx Mk 8 from RNAS Yeovilton.

Organised by Lt Ben Ransom from MWS Collingwood, whose daughter Florence is a pupil at the school, and Lt Cdr 'Hattie' Jacques of 815 NAS, the visit was a thrilling experience for pupils and teachers alike.

Many of them had never been so close to a helicopter before, let alone a helicopter as sophisticated and graceful as the Lynx.

The Lynx landed on the school's playing fields, fortunately without the newly-acquired rugby posts.

The helicopter remained at the school for a couple of hours, allowing each student a chance to have a good look around the aircraft and time to ask as many questions as they could about the Lynx to aircrew Lt Cdr Graham Cooke and Lt Pete Higgins.

The pupils' ages at Rookesbury Park range from two years nine months to 13 years, and the visit certainly grabbed their imagination, with many asking when they could join the Royal Navy and fly helicopters.

Lt Ransom said: "Visits such as these to schools throughout the country are extremely important not only in introducing the Royal Navy to the next generation but also in promoting the professionalism of the Armed Forces in the community."

"It is important that we engage children of all ages, stimulating their imaginations."



"This has been a memorable visit for Rookesbury Park."

As the Lynx departed and covered the pupils in a shower of fallen leaves, they raised three cheers to the crew and returned to lessons with huge smiles on

their faces – and that was just the teachers...

● *Madelaine Alexander, headmistress Pippa Harris-Burland, Florence Ransom, Lt Ben Ransom, Lt Cdr Graham Cooke and Lt Pete Higgins*

St John's solution

UNDER the stewardship of new headmistress Angela Parry-Davies, St John's School in Sidmouth has just announced the availability of a special bursary for the Forces.

With a strong tradition of Forces children in the school, St John's believes it is well positioned to offer the very best all-round boarding solution to Forces families and with the launch of the special bursary the school aims to capitalise on that.

As Angela Parry-Davies explained: "St John's aims to be much more than 'just' a school – it aims to provide an education for life."

"We work hard to achieve academic success, but we also believe in providing the foundations that will help create rounded individuals who can succeed in any walk of life."

"Our children learn and we try to make sure that they have fun doing it."

For the boarders, for whom St John's is a second home, having fun certainly seems to be the order of the day.

With a boarding capacity of around 70 children and an additional 200 day children, the school is large enough to offer a broad study programme yet small enough to retain the special family feel that is so valued by all the children, parents and staff.

Evenings are made up of games, activities or playing with friends in the beautiful grounds and excellent facilities.

At weekends the most is made of the wonderful location of the school with a wide range of days out.

The school is also flexible about their approach to boarding; Angela Parry-Davies said: "We understand that Forces families have particular needs – we try to be as flexible as possible to make sure that the whole boarding experience is as positive for parents as it is for our children."

"In some ways it is difficult to put into words what makes

St John's different, so we always encourage people to visit the school because we think you will feel what a special place it is – to our children, our parents and our staff."

For more information, call 01395 513 984, email info@stjohnsdevon.co.uk or visit the website online at www.stjohnsdevon.co.uk.

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LOMOND School is one of Scotland's most modern and progressive independent schools.

Situated in Helensburgh on the banks of the Clyde and on the edge of the Loch Lomond National Park, it was founded in 1977.

Helensburgh has excellent rail links with Glasgow and is only 35 minutes from Glasgow airport.

Facilities at the school are first class with a modern main school building opened in 1997.

A feature of the school has been its extensive investment in ICT and other facilities to enhance the learning environment.

In November 2006 a superb new art room was opened.

In 2005 a new international size AstroTurf hockey pitch was developed.

The school also has plans for a new sports hall to be opened in 2009.

Scotland's first coeducational boarding house opened its doors in 2003; boys and girls are housed in en-suite rooms on separate floors with a communal ground floor with common rooms and a variety of social spaces.

Having boys and girls on the same site can share the experience of boarding school whilst living in the same building.

In a recent inspection by HMI Care Commission, Lomond's boarding was described as setting 'benchmark standards' for the sector.

With HMNB Clyde on the doorstep, staff in the boarding house have extensive experience of working with Naval families and understand the pressures of service life.

The school welcomes enquiries from families moving to or from the area for both boarding and day places and the school operates the MOD continuity of education allowance.

The new Special Bursary for Forces



With a strong tradition of forces children in the school, St John's offers the very best all-round boarding solution for boys and girls from 7 to 13. In a beautiful location and with extensive grounds and facilities, St John's children live life to the full.

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For details about the Special Bursary call Angela Parry-Davies on 01395 513984 or email her at info@stjohnsdevon.co.uk

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West Hill goes west

IN 1939 West Hill Park pupils were evacuated to Polzeath, Cornwall. Sixty-eight years later a school-funded, science-based residential field trip saw the entire group of Year 7 pupils heading for Cornwall as an annual event.

The pupils were frenetically busy during the entire week following a programme of events to continue both their academic, social and physical development.

They visited Boscastle to follow up their work in geography about the flooding and its after-effects, and the Eden Project, where they met Ray Mears (see picture right) and joined in the filming of the Eden Project's bid for lottery money to buy a new biome.

The Blue Reef Aquarium and rock pools at Polzeath provided the opportunity to continue their science work on conservation, habitats and how to study them



accurately.

The students cycled the Camel Trail, kayaked in the Camel Estuary and sea-climbed at Bosigran to challenge them-

selves physically and in some cases emotionally.

All involved had an amazing time and next year's visits are already booked.

Shebbear set in Devon

SHEBBEAR College is a thriving independent school set in 85 acres of safe Devon countryside.

Offering coeducation for both day and boarding pupils from age 3 to 18, the college has 330 pupils, including 91 boarders.

Shebbear College seeks to harness young people's capabilities in both academic and social spheres.

All pupils and members of the teaching staff take part in an extensive after-school activities programme where the accent is on the promotion of a friendly, family community.

The college has tremendous experience in all aspects of caring for children from service families. Forces Bursaries are available.

Albion floods up for Trinity

IN THE autumn term Trinity School Combined Cadet Force cadets from both RN and Army sections were privileged to experience life at sea on board HMS Albion, the school's affiliated ship, on three separate occasions.

The first passage took place in mid September. Fifteen cadets and their commanding officer Lt Cdr Geraldine Poulet-Bowden RNR joined the ship at Portsmouth, after a day in the Historic Dockyard around the famous HMS Victory celebrating 200 years of Naval life and traditions.

The ship set sail on Monday and arrived at HMS Albion's home base of Devonport on Tuesday morning. Five lucky cadets joined the Royal Marines of 6 Assault Squadron on the four

LCUs (Landing Craft Utility) stored within the assault ship as the dock was flooded. The four boats slipped away to race back from just outside Plymouth breakwater to No 4 Basin at Devonport ahead of the arrival of the warship at 14 Wharf.

In early October another party of cadets joined the assault ship in Portsmouth once again but this time sailed to Greenwich and moored to buoys in front of the old Royal Naval College in Greenwich after an exhilarating, if rainy, passage up the Thames Estuary.

The following weekend, accompanied once again by Lt Cdr Poulet-Bowden, the final party of cadets joined the ship at Greenwich and sailed all the way back to Devonport.

New man at the top of Duke of York

THE NEW headmaster of the Duke of York's Royal Military School, Charles Johnson, spoke about his impressions of the school over his first year of tenure.

He said: "A year ago my wife and I first set eyes on the Duke of York's Royal Military School.

"I have spent my whole teaching career of more than 20 years in independent boarding schools – as well as attending one myself – and what struck me most was the extensive grounds and some of our marvellous facilities including indoor swimming and small golf course and an outside and indoor range. These were light years away from the crowded campuses of the Thames Valley with which I was familiar."

He added: "I was also impressed by the social ability and friendliness of the pupils who seemed to have an easy confidence in what they were. There was a very tangible feeling of community that stems from our long and established history of educating those who have served in any of the three Forces."

He concluded: "The Duke of York is clearly a vibrant and exciting school with a unique ethos tailor-made for children of Service families."

Riding high at Ryde

SET in an oasis of green in the heart of Ryde, and overlooking the Solent, Ryde School is easily accessible from the mainland.

The Isle of Wight provides a safe and secure environment for both day pupils and boarders. Fully co-educational, the school offers a high quality of education up to the age of 18.

Strategies are in place for both gifted and talented pupils and for those who may need support. This year, pupils achieved a 100 per cent pass at A-level with 71 per cent A/B grades. At GCSE, pupils achieved 96 per cent A – C grades, 48 per cent being A/A*.

Bursaries are offered for full boarders from service families.

Chilton charm

CHILTON Cantelo is a successful, small (425-pupil/210 boarder), ISA-accredited, Cognita, 'family' day/boarding school for boys and girls aged seven to 16.

Set in and around an imposing 18th-Century manor house and 20 acres of Somerset countryside, only five miles from Yeovil and Sherborne, Chilton offers a genuine all-round education designed to develop each pupil's potential.

Classes are small: results exceptional. Chilton offers a reasonably-priced, quality education with very high standards of teaching and pastoral care.

Perrott Hill

"Time and space for a full education"

Co-educational day and boarding Prep School educating children from 3-13

Set in stunning grounds on the Dorset/Somerset border

Perrott Hill is a successful country prep school where children are encouraged to thrive and reach their individual potential.

The school has excellent academic and pastoral records.

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9.30-12.30

Scholarship Morning:
Friday 1st February

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www.kellycollege.com
Tavistock, Devon

Illustrious days at RHS

AT THE beginning of the autumn term, 102 Year 9 pupils at the Royal Hospital School were invited to spend a day at sea aboard the Fleet flagship HMS Illustrious by the commanding officer Capt Tim Fraser.

Pupils and staff had a full tour of the ship, experienced various sea manoeuvres and witnessed a spectacular flying display.

After their experience on board the school's affiliated ship, the pupils slept overnight on HMS Bristol, the cadet accommodation ship docked at Whale Island, adjacent to Portsmouth Naval Base.

Headmaster Howard Blackett thanked Capt Fraser for the invitation and said: "This was a wonderful opportunity for our pupils to have an insight into the professional world of the Royal Navy and their flagship."

The Royal Hospital School is a coeducational full boarding and day school for 11 to 18 year olds, set in 200 acres of Suffolk countryside.

The school is not only producing reputable academic achievement, but it is nationally renowned for its music, has exceptional sports facilities including RYA sailing tuition, a popular Combined



● Pupils from the Royal Hospital School on board HMS Illustrious

Cadet Force and Community Action Team, outstanding art, design and technology and an activity programme that keeps children inspired and busy.

The school is currently undergoing a multi-million pound development programme including the refurbishment of all ten boarding houses and the building of a new music school.

Originally established as a school for children of Naval families, the Royal Hospital School is, today, regarded as one of the country's leading independent coeducational

boarding schools.

Pupils are proud of the school's unique maritime heritage and all are supplied with a Naval uniform which is worn to formal parades; spectacular events that generate tremendous pride amongst pupils and parents alike.

Fees for families eligible for MOD Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) are set so that you pay just £1,704 (2007/08).

For more information contact admissions on 01473 326 210 or send an email to admissions@royalhospitalschool.org.

Breadth of learning at Perrott Hill

PERROTT Hill offers a number of scholarships annually for academic, all-rounder, sporting and musical ability. The school's scholarship morning this year is on Friday February 1.

Situated in the most glorious setting of 25 acres of woods, mature gardens and fields, Perrott Hill overlooks the Somerset/Dorset countryside and is a perfect environment for children.

Exciting developments at Perrott Hill mean that a new sports hall and a performing arts centre are to be built.

The school continues to grow in size and is enormously proud of its academic and pastoral records.

In the last three years 40 per cent of leavers have gained scholarships to their senior schools.

Perrott Hill is a happy and successful prep school educating children from three to 13 years.

For further information, contact the school office on 01460 72051.

Twyford School

Winchester

An Independent Day & Weekly Boarding School for boys and girls aged 3 to 13 years



A family orientated school with small classes. Proven success in scholarship exams (58 in the last 6 years) and Common Entrance to all the major senior schools. High standards of sport, music, art & design.

For a prospectus or to arrange a visit please telephone the Registrar: 01962 712269 www.twyfordschool.com

A good year at Twyford

TWYFORD School, a coeducational day and weekly boarding school near Winchester, is enjoying a most successful year.

An unprecedented 18 pupils gained awards to their senior school. These included nine music awards, five academic scholarships, one design scholarship and three sports awards.

All 37 Year 8 pupils gained entry to the senior school of choice.

The school continues to punch above its weight in the national prep school competitions with excellent results in the SATiPs general knowledge quiz and Townsend Warner History Prize.

On the sports front, the Under 13 girls were placed fourth in the IAPS netball and third in the IAPS hockey – an extraordinary performance from a year group of just 11 girls.

The boys' cricket team won the Hampshire Under 13 Cup, and the same group also toured South Africa.

Individually three cricketers, three hockey players, two swimmers and one tennis player have represented Hampshire, and one girl was crowned IAPS high-jump champion and Wessex record holder for her year group.

The boarding facilities have been refurbished, including new bathrooms and toilets, and a comfortable senior dormitory completed this summer.



Open Day

Saturday 19th January 10:30am - 12 noon

West Hill Park is an independent day and boarding school for girls and boys from 2½ to 13 years old. We pride ourselves on our academic results, our friendly environment and our excellent facilities.

New Nursery Wrap-around Care*

*To 6pm daily plus School Holiday care

Come and visit the school. We will show you and your children around. You can sit in on our classes and get a real feel for life at West Hill Park.

So come along, have a coffee, talk to staff and pupils and find out more about our school.

Call us on 01329 842356 to find out more about the open day or visit www.westhillpark.com

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See you on the 19th!

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West Hill Park



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Life here is full of opportunity. The School has a proud reputation for musical excellence and uniquely offers RYA sailing tuition as part of the curriculum.

Fees for families claiming MOD CEA are set so that for 2007/08 parental contribution is just £1,704

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- Art, design, music and drama thrive
- 75 acres of grounds

Contact the Registrar at:

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E-mail: registrar@cranbrook.kent.sch.uk

www.cranbrookschool.co.uk

CRANBROOK SCHOOL

One of the most successful schools in Britain

Kelly trumpets CCF

IN SUMMER last year, the Navy section of the Kelly College's Combined Cadet Force was delighted to take up an invitation to spend the afternoon on HMS Trumpeter, Bristol University's URNU 20-metre inshore training ship.

The Kelly pupils arrived at Dartmouth Naval College to bright sunshine and clear skies. After a quick safety briefing they went to sea on board HMS Trumpeter under the command of Lt Will King and his team.

All the students were given a tour of Trumpeter's engine room, bridge and living quarters by two Navy cadets at Bristol University.

The Kelly cadets were given the opportunity to take the helm and also to get involved with some navigation. Alex Hawkings performed some useful navigation using the Polaris, fixing a TV aerial just north of Start Point lighthouse. Victoria Cole performed a figure



of eight whilst at the helm, and then spun the vessel on a sixpence in Torcross Bay, using the 'buttock theory' on the twin engines.

The afternoon ended with the Kelly cadets being presented with HMS Trumpeter's crest and an offer to return when next in Dartmouth.

Bromsgrove shines in the School Guide

FLAIR, discipline, academic rigour: that's what Bromsgrove is all about.

Excellent academic performance achieved through hard work, not over-fussy cherry-picking; sport played to win at international, national and local level; creative work played, performed and exhibited to move the soul, not tick boxes on a CV.

Among its 1,200 children aged seven to 18, 500-year-old Bromsgrove has over 400 boarding pupils.

The school offers a home, not a place to sleep after work.

The houses are different, as boarding houses in the best schools should be, but there are core values and structures shared by all.

Each house has resident house-parents and a dedicated tutor team: staff are on hand 24 hours a day, seven days per week.

Occasional boarding is possible; boarders may go home on a Friday or Saturday night – most do not, and Sunday programmes are hugely varied.

The unique optional Saturday activity programme is extensive and innovative, and includes numerous outdoor activities.

In 2006-07 Bromsgrove School received the most *Good Schools Guide* awards for any coeducational independent school in the country, and shares top position

with Eton, Wycombe Abbey and North London Collegiate, all of which are single sex.

The *Good Schools Guide*'s inspection earlier in the year found "outstanding leadership" at Bromsgrove.

The *Guide* continued: "Bromsgrove inhabits the academic stratosphere... all departments are strong."

Regarding sport, the *Guide* observed: "Bromsgrove games are outstanding."

Over £23 million has been invested in buildings and facilities since 1994.

Nearly one quarter of that sum has been spent on 100 new en-suite boarding rooms.

These have joined state-of-the-art, architecturally-striking facilities and significant sports developments.

The school is situated 15 miles from both Birmingham and Worcester.

Forces at the heart of Queen Victoria

QUEEN Victoria School is unique in Scotland; it can trace its history back to the turn of the last century when the idea was first mooted of a school to commemorate those Scottish soldiers and sailors who fell during the Boer Wars.

The proposal was warmly received by Queen Victoria herself, and upon her death the following year, it was resolved that the school should serve the dual purpose of commemorating the dead Servicemen and a living memorial to the late Empress.

It is still run by the Ministry of Defence and provides top quality education for the children of soldiers, sailors and airmen and women who are from or have served in Scotland.

The children at the school are aged between ten and 18 (P7 to S6), the main intake being at Primary 7.

The school offers its pupils a wide range and balanced curriculum following the Scottish educational system and includes courses at Standard, Intermediate 2 and Higher Grades of the Scottish Certificate of Education.

Pupils also have the opportunity to study in a number of subjects for the Advanced Higher examinations. Increasingly pupils move on to Higher and Further Education but career links with the Services remain strong.

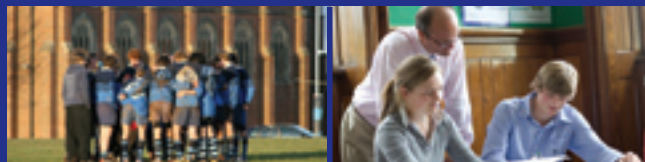
Wellington on parade

AS IN previous years, the Wellington School Corps of Drums and its Combined Cadet Force led the annual 500-strong Remembrance Day parade to the local service in the Town Park.

The entire parade assembled in the school quad and was led by Drum Major Alexandra Stewart, who is in the Upper Sixth at the school.

The school's CCF now includes Army, Air Force and Royal Navy sections, all of whom were smartly turned out for the day.

OPENING MINDS...



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- Academic, all-rounder and music scholarships
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26th-27th January - Entrance and Audition Weekend
Saturday 2nd February - Junior School Open Morning
Saturday 1st March - Senior School Open Morning
Friday 7th March - Junior School Open Morning

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Soften the impact with CEAS

WE ALL know that Service life has a great impact on children's education.

Changing schools, changing friends, just getting settled before it's time to move on again.

Meanwhile, you'll be trying to find out about the schools near your next posting.

It can be a worrying time – but CEAS is there to help you to find out the answers to your questions and support you if you have a problem.

What are the schools like in the area you are posted to? If you are posted overseas, where is the nearest SCE school?

Is it fair to keep asking your children to change schools every two or three years or would a boarding school be better? How do you find out about boarding schools?

What if your child has special needs? What facilities do SCE schools have to support children with special needs?

If you are returning to the UK, how do you find out which schools in the nearby area are best?

What facilities do they have and do they have space for your child? It can be really complicated

– but CEAS is there to give you advice and help about your children's schooling, particularly:

■ **Boarding School Advice.** Would a boarding school be right for your child? What types of boarding school are there and how do you pick one? How do you apply for Boarding School Allowance? How much is it – and what are the rules?

■ **Special Education Needs.** CEAS keeps the register of Service children with Special Education Needs (SEN) and tries to make sure that there is minimum disruption to the support given to children with SEN when they move between schools. When you are posted overseas, CEAS can help you to check that the overseas school is able to meet your child's needs before the posting takes place. This could be a great help in putting your mind at rest about an overseas posting.

■ **Appeals and representation.** CEAS will also help to smooth the way when you are posted back to the UK. They will advise you and can represent you if you have difficulty in getting your child into the school of your choice.

Cenotaph honour for King's Bruton

THE SERVICE of Remembrance at the Cenotaph in Whitehall is one of the great state occasions of the nation where serving soldiers, veterans and representatives of many public and voluntary services participate.

For the first time this year an invitation was sent to the Combined Cadet Forces and the school chosen to represent the CCF was **King's School, Bruton**.

For half a term, 36 cadets and two officers practised their drill at the school during morning breaks and after Wednesday afternoon CCF activities.

For the last two weeks, a significant proportion of the school seemed to be permanently in uniform as the practices became longer and more intense. Boys were frog-marched to the barber and girls learned how to bun up their hair with a military hairnet.

The ceremony itself was moving and deeply impressive.

The cadets had to keep their wits about them, coping with frequent bottle-necks in the marching, but marshals ensured that the march past the Cenotaph and the royal salute flowed smoothly and with great dignity.

After the parade, the cadets were greeted by Air Chief Marshall Sir Peter Squire, senior warden of



King's, who had also taken part in the parade. Finally, a long, tired journey home.

Dr Glyn Jenkins, commanding officer CCF, stated: "It was marvellous to have taken part in this famous parade; to have been the first CCF to do so was a remarkable privilege."

The school also owes a debt of gratitude to Monica Ashton who helped prepare the cadets for this event. It was fitting that, after 20 years of devoted service to the CCF at King's, this should be Monica's last official duty.

Drama at St John's

JUNIOR school pupils at **St John's College** in Southsea were treated to an interactive performance from the Quantum Theatre, where as well as being entertained they also learnt valuable science and environmental lessons.

The *What if it rains?* musical production is aimed at key stage one and two pupils and is based on subjects from the National Curriculum for Science.

St John's College pupils learnt about the effects of vehicles on the environment as well as health and safety when walking to school and the benefits of exercise.

Tony Shrubsall, head of the Junior School at St John's College, said: "The idea of having the Quantum Theatre visit was for the children to have fun and learn at the same time."

"Events such as these provide a

Maths pioneers at Wells Cathedral

YEAR 11 students from **Wells Cathedral School** are among the first pupils in Somerset to have pioneered the International GCSE (IGCSE) mathematics course.

The school took the decision to change to the IGCSE two years ago in order to provide students with a more stretching syllabus and a smoother transition to A-level, even though the decision is likely to result in a dramatic slide down the school results league tables as IGCSE is not a qualification monitored by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

Students were very enthusiastic about the course they had just completed. "I really enjoyed the course because it was more stretching than standard GCSE," said Philip Hale from Pilton.

"Because there was no coursework, we could focus on the subject and the exam itself, and we were treated in a more adult way."

"The extra topics we've studied, like calculus and set theory will ease us into A-level," said Rose Penfold from Westbury-sub-Mendip, "and the exam papers

were more professional."

Head of mathematics Susie Jameson said: "Students seem more confident and stimulated by the IGCSE syllabus."

"This is a huge benefit for those going on to take A-levels in mathematics and the sciences."

She added: "Next year we have a record number of students going on to study A-level mathematics, which I believe is in part due to their enjoyment of the IGCSE syllabus."

CHILTON CANTELO SCHOOL

Chilton Cantelo, Yeovil, Somerset BA22 8BG

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Directorate of Joint Capability

Arabic, Pashto and Farsi/Dari long language courses for Service Personnel at the Defence School of Languages

Applications are invited for the next Directorate of Joint Commitments (DJC) sponsored long languages courses in Arabic, Pashto and Farsi/Dari at the Defence School of Languages, Beaconsfield, which are planned to start in July 2008 and January 2009.

The DJC sponsored courses, which last 15 months and aim for students to reach the NATO STANAG 6001 standard SLP 3 minimum professional, are run in response to the operational need for linguists in Iraq and Afghanistan and are followed by operational tours in linguistic roles.

Officers of any rank up to OF3 (Maj/Lt Cdr/Sqn Ldr) and Ratings/ Other Ranks at any level may apply. The courses are open to both regular and reservist service personnel of all service branches and specialisations. Applications must be endorsed by the volunteer's Commanding Officer and personnel authority.

Selection for the courses is by interview and candidates must have completed a Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) to the required standard or hold a formal qualification in a foreign language (minimum level: A Level Grade C).

For further information or to request an application form please contact

WO1 Adrian Stone by telephone on 01980 615363 (civ) or 94344 5363 (mil), or by email to wo-log@dolsu.mod.uk or DOLSU-LCG-WO.

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FURTHER INFORMATION

There may also be openings for qualified Ratings in other branches – deck, engineering, catering or communications.

To find out more or for an application form, phone RFA Recruitment on

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Closing date: 25 January 2008.



Engineers are set for recognition

A NEW agreement will provide a streamlined route to professional recognition for Royal Navy engineers.

Rear Admiral Nigel Guild, Chief Naval Engineering Officer, put pen to paper alongside Robin McGill, Chief Executive of the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET), to set up the scheme (pictured above).

Navy Weapon Engineers (GS and SM) from Leading Engineering Technician to Weapon Engineering Officer will now achieve professional recognition by completing a simple application form.

Applications can be made for Chartered Engineer (CEng), Incorporated Engineer (IEng) or Engineering Technician (EngTech) registration once the following career milestones are reached:

CEng: Weapon Engineer Officer on promotion to Lt Cdr and completion of a post-promotion career interview;

IEng: Weapon Engineer Officer on completion of the WE Charge Board, Chief Petty Officer WEA upon PQE completion, and Chief Petty Officer ET(WE) on completion of the CPOET Qualifying Course;

EngTech: Leading Engineering Technician, upon completion of LET Task Book and achieving OPS.

Further information can be found within 2007DIN01-108, www.theiet.org or MoDWeb <http://royalnavy.defence.mod.uk/fleeteng/general/index.htm>

It's your 2-6

NEED to get your message across to the rest of the RN?

To feature in 2-6 contact Lt Cdr Gregor Birse (Fleet Media Ops), 93832 8809 or Lt Cdr Harvey Burwin (DPR(N)), 9621 85984.

Complaints watchdog brings 'human touch'

WHEN the House of Commons debated the post of Service Complaints Commissioner last autumn, some said only someone with a military background would have the understanding of the Forces to take it on.

The subsequent appointment of a former academic and equal opportunities expert, even though she set up the new police complaints system, probably did little to allay their reservations.

But Dr Susan Atkins, the first Commissioner, has no intention of sweeping in and immediately telling the Services how to change.

Although she is independent and has the right of unfettered access to the Defence Secretary, she also has enough experience of organisations to take stock before rushing in.

"All my career I've worked with different professions and different services," she told *Navy News*.

"I led the probation service through a period of fundamental change, I've worked with the police and prison service and lately with the health service, and I'm very adept at going in and learning a culture and then advising on what is going to work within it."

She added: "I do understand the need for discipline and rigour, and the fact that different organisations have different ways of doing things for good reasons."

"Training has to be tough – I accept that."

"So although I will be independent in my judgement, I will be collaborative in my approach."

Dr Atkins, a 52-year-old down-to-earth Northerner, was appointed last November.

Although her post only goes live on January 1, she spent several weeks last year starting to get to know the Services.

The two main aims of her new job are to provide a rigorous scrutiny of the complaints system, including an annual report to Parliament, and to offer an alternative route for Service people or friends and family to complain about bullying, harassment, discrimination, or other unacceptable behaviour.

So does she think the Armed Forces have a serious problem?

"All the research shows there is bullying and harassment, and it would be very naïve of anyone in any organisation to say it didn't exist," she answered.



● Dr Susan Atkins addresses an Army audience at Upavon

Picture: G3 Media Ops HQ Land

"The pressures of working life are such that what a manager may see as firm management can be perceived as bullying, but you have to think carefully what those terms mean to different people."

She added: "There are particular issues about bullying and harassment in Service life, particularly in the Navy, because not only are you there 24/7 when you're serving in a ship, but you're in a confined environment."

"I'm informed that actually it's easier for sailors on board because you have other people with you, and you have your chaplain there – and I intend to go out and test this by talking to them."

Under the new system, complainants can go straight to the Commissioner if they wish,

but as she has no powers of investigation, their cases will still be passed via JPA through the chain of command.

So will she make any difference? She said: "Having someone who's the equivalent of a three-star to write to, and the Commanding Officer having to inform me within 15 working days of the outcome, is a bit like driving when you know there's a speed camera – it's an incentive to do the right thing."

"If complainants are still not satisfied, I can put the complaint to the CO's superior, and then to a Service Complaints Panel which has an independent member."

What nobody can confidently predict is what workload she can expect.

She said: "I'll have a better idea

of that when I go out and meet Service personnel, their families and the organisations who support them."

"People can contact me by letter and email, but they can't just ring up, because I think there needs to be a certain formality – it isn't something that should be done lightly."

She added: "It will be interesting to see how this job evolves."

"One of my responsibilities, as the first Commissioner, is to set it up and shape it."

Dr Atkins' formal induction period included meeting the three Service chiefs and spending a week in Afghanistan.

Now she intends to spend at least one day a week meeting Servicemen and women.

"Talking to people is the way to build up a sense of what they do," she explained.

"It gives me an idea of what the issues are and what the hotspots are – and the intuition about when I'm being spun a yarn."

"It also enables me to bring experience of all three Services so they can learn from each other."

Dr Atkins believes there are always improvements to be made in the way complaints are dealt with, and the MOD will be no exception.

"All organisations tend to batten down the hatches when something goes wrong," she said.

"My experience has taught me you have to explain to people as much as you can – and if you can't tell them immediately, tell them when you will be able to tell them."

"People want to know what went wrong, why, and what actions will be taken, either for them, or to make sure it doesn't happen to anyone else."

"The key is to act speedily."

She added: "In my experience people want the human touch – they want to know you are taking them seriously and if you tell them something in confidence, in my experience, they rarely betray it."

"You must act firmly and swiftly where you can."

So is she looking forward to being the first SCC?

"Absolutely!" she said. "I wouldn't have taken the job if I didn't want to work with the Armed Forces."

"And the very fact of my existence as Commissioner shows how committed the Service chiefs are to fairness and equality."



Part of the China Fleet?

WARSHIPS and porcelain – two items not normally bracketed together, but that is the case with one of the RN Trophy Store's more fragile objects.

Trophy Number 20211 is a 12-inch high Royal Copenhagen oviform shaped porcelain vase.

The two faces have circular painted panels; on one side is shown the battlecruiser HMS Tiger (pictured above), and on the other is the Danish battleship Peder Skram (below).

This trophy was presented to HMS Tiger by Cdr Benjamin Olzen of the Royal Danish Navy in March 1928.

On January 24 1915 a squadron of three battlecruisers, an armoured cruiser and lighter forces of the German High Seas Fleet, under the command of Rear Admiral Hipper in the Seydlitz, were engaged in the North Sea by a Royal Navy battlecruiser squadron, under the command of Vice Admiral Sir David Beatty in HMS Lion, in what was known as the Battle of Dogger Bank.

The others involved were HM ships Tiger, Princess Royal, New Zealand and Indomitable, supported by four cruisers and three destroyer squadrons.

German armoured cruiser Blucher was hit and became detached from the German force, and was later sunk while her compatriots escaped.



JPA prompts move to self-service

IT IS now more than a year since JPA was rolled out, and its introduction has had a direct impact on every one of us, from calculating our pay and allowances to administering our assignments.

For us, the Career Managers, it has heralded a significant change to the way we do business and, 12 months on, routines continue to be revised and improvements introduced.

The most significant change within Career Management has been the move to individual self-service.

Hitherto sailors informed Drafty of their wishes by completing the Drafting Preference Card and by bidding for a particular post or course by submitting a Drafting

Request form.

These were then passed through the Divisional system and posted on to Drafty.

Since November 2006, individuals deal direct with their Career Manager by inputting and updating their preferences online.

Additional information can be submitted via email by the Divisional Officer or Senior Rating, but this cannot amend the preferences submitted.

Career Managers base assignment decisions on meeting Service needs, the opportunities available to develop your career and on your personal preferences.

Within the Logistics team, the ratings Career Managers are Senior Ratings and are drawn from each of the Branch specialisations.

They are fully empowered and are authorised to issue Assignment Orders direct to individuals, based on information you submit.

Disappointingly there are a surprisingly high proportion of sailors who have still not opened their self-service account and

Assignment Corner

input or updated their sea and shore preferences.

We are not telepathic, and without access to your preferences you risk being assigned out of area or to another class of ship.

And if you are interested in a Local Foreign Service appointment, again indicate this via JPA.

Turning to regional Junior Rating Career Management, in order to simplify matters, responsibility for issuing assignments, granting of Acting Higher Rank and provision of careers advice was transferred to Waterfront Manning Organisations (WMO) on October 22 2007.

This will provide improved access to Career Managers in the main base areas, and afford better visibility of the assignment opportunities available.

In addition, the Regional Career Management Advisors will be

incorporated into the WMOs and will continue to provide career advice to both JRs and SRs.

Away from the main base areas in the UK and abroad, Logistics Junior Ratings working in either Naval or tri-Service establishments will be allocated to one of the three Base Port WMOs.

A small number of specialist groups will continue to be career managed within the HQ, and for Logistics Branch personnel this is limited to those Catering Services JRs employed in retinue posts, but only whilst they remain in such employment.

Career Management of Officers and Senior Ratings is to continue to be undertaken centrally, as they are deployed nationally rather than predominantly on a regional basis.

Meanwhile, the demand for

RN Logistics Branch skills on Operational Augmentation – supporting operations around the world – remains high.

While there are signs that the number of people committed to positions in Iraq is beginning to reduce, other requirements continue to emerge.

There are opportunities at every rate and rank, from JR to senior Logistics Officer, to undertake a range of personnel administration, IT, supply chain and catering services employment and to gain valuable tri-Service experience in an operational environment.

Many find themselves in unusual but rewarding roles, and often with significant responsibility.

Most augmentees will be away from their regular dark blue jobs for approximately nine months – three weeks pre-deployment training and preparation, six months deployed, followed by approximately two months leave.

And Operational Tours count as Sea Service, so you can expect to have the next sea assignment

reduced by the amount of time you were deployed.

Many Logisticians volunteer for this unusual tasking, but the Career Managers will always welcome more names from those who seek a new challenge.

Volunteers should register their interest online when updating JPA with individual preferences. There is also the option to indicate in what area you wish to serve.

Logistics Career Managers:

Capt Digby Nelson (Logistics and Medical Personnel Team Leader); **Cdr Nigel Trump** (Officers and Ratings Career Manager); **Lt Cdr Rachel Scandling** (Officers Career Manager); **Lt Cdr Kevin Bunt** (Ratings Career Manager and Logs Pers/SC Supervisor); **WO1 Chris Mountford** (WOs Career Manager and Logs CS Supervisor); **PO Logs(Pers) Si Ashwood** (Logs Pers Career Manager); **PO Logs(SC) Andy Bouckley** (Logs SC Career Manager); **PO Logs (CS) Gary Maskell** (Logs CS Career Manager).



Soaraway Sun helps discount scheme

THE Sun newspaper has adopted the 'Help for Heroes' campaign, which has resulted in a flood of discounts and good deals on a range of products and services for Service personnel.

The Sun has been placing all new offers online and in its daily newspaper on its 'Wall of Honour'.

These new offers add to the huge range in the MOD's own Defence Discount Scheme.

This includes the Defence Discount directory, which contains more than 170 pages of discounted offers, and the Defence Discount website, which includes discounts from more than 500 companies.

The website is now linked to the Wall of Honour so that Service personnel can take advantage of the whole range of schemes and discounts open to them and the MOD is now the point of contact for all offers.

'Help for Heroes' is a charity started by artists Bryn and Emma Parry who were so moved by their visit to Selly Oak hospital that they decided to raise money for Service personnel.

They declared that they wanted "people to show their support for our Servicemen and women who serve their country so bravely and deserve the very best care we can provide.

"We aim to raise a very great deal of money, and will pass the funds directly to the Services and their charities to use where most needed."

General Sir Richard Dannatt, Chief of the General Staff and Head of the Army, said: "I wholeheartedly welcome this brilliant initiative.

"Funds raised by 'Help for Heroes' will enable the British people, and friends overseas, to offer practical support for our wounded Servicemen and their families.

"For example, our outstanding tri-Service Rehabilitation Centre at Headley Court urgently needs a new gym and full-size swimming pool complex.

"Funds raised by 'Help for Heroes' will help build it."

See www.forcesdiscounts-mod.co.uk, www.thesun.co.uk/wallofhonour or www.brynparrystudios.com/ or contact SP Pol Pay & Allowances Staff (SO1 Pay & Allowances Co-ord, Wg Cdr Andy Hunter, tel: 9621 87434).

RNPT dates

DATES and details of the RN Presentation Team's events in the coming months are:

📅 **Tues Jan 22:** RAF Valley, Holyhead;

📅 **Weds Jan 23:** Pentre Jane Morgan, University of Wales, Penglais, Aberystwyth;

📅 **Tues Feb 5:** Stoke Town Hall, Glebe Street, Stoke-on-Trent;

📅 **Weds Feb 6:** The Royal Oak, South Street, Leominster;

📅 **Thurs Feb 7:** The Hill, Pen-y-Pound, Abergavenny;

📅 **Tues Feb 12:** Hartlepool Historic Quay, Maritime Avenue, Hartlepool Marina;

📅 **Weds Feb 13:** Auckland Castle, Bishop Auckland;

📅 **Tues Feb 19:** The Rosehill Barn, Moresby, Whitehaven;

📅 **Weds Feb 20:** the Abbey House Hotel, Abbey Road, Barrow-in-Furness;

📅 **Tues Feb 26:** The Castle Green Hotel, Kendal;

📅 **Thurs Feb 28:** The Rendezvous Hotel, Keighley Road, Skipton;

📅 **Weds March 5:** Town Hall, Burton-on-Trent.

Anyone wanting to book a place at a presentation should contact the RNPT on 020 8833 8020 or email rnpt@tinet.gov.uk

Aim high with AT



● Whether you fancy climbing to the peak of a snow-clad mountain...

ADVENTUROUS Training (AT) in the Royal Navy is not just a change of scene – it supports the very ethos of the Senior Service.

AT presses all the right buttons in a number of areas.

It fosters team spirit, it exposes individuals to a risk in a controlled environment, and it opens up unparalleled opportunities for new experiences and qualifications.

AT can add considerably to improving morale and, critically, positively influencing vital elements of Naval Capability.

RN AT is incredibly diverse – from parachuting and sub aqua diving to polar expeditions, all tastes are catered for.

All serving Naval personnel are encouraged to take part in one week of AT each year, and Personnel Functional Standards states that units should provide all personnel with the opportunity to participate in five days AT each year, to be counted as normal working days.

JSP 419 lists all tri-Service AT courses conducted to recognised standards by qualified instructors, available to all.

JSP 419 defines AT as "challenging outdoor training ... in specified adventurous activities, involving controlled exposure to risk, to develop leadership, teamwork, physical fitness, moral and physical courage, among other personal attributes and skills vital to operational capability".

It also details all Joint Service AT centres and lays down the application process, while BR 4024 offers specific Naval Adventurous Training policy and information.

The RN provides joint Service training for sailing and sub aqua activities.

The Joint Services Adventurous Sail Training Centre (JSASTC) in Gosport provides RYA and Service-specific courses leading to transferable qualifications.

The Centre's craft can be booked for independent expeditions, and they can provide qualified skippers to lead these expeditions – see www.jsastc.org

Sub aqua diving training is provided by the Joint Services Sub Aqua Diving Centre (JSSADC) at Fort Bovisand, near Plymouth.

Offering a range of BSAC courses, the centre can cater for novices right through to the modern-day Jacques Cousteau – see www.jssadc.co.uk

One area of AT known to many is Exercise Bavarian Surprise, which runs from March until the end of September, offering up to 50 personnel each week the opportunity to participate in ski mountaineering, climbing, klettersteig (climbing and scrambling on wires and ladders), mountain biking and kayaking.

Officer in Charge Capt Paul Gellender RM is convinced of its benefits: "Exercise Bavarian Surprise will be the first opportunity most personnel will have to participate in an AT exercise since training.

"Initially, many will assume that this is going to be some form of military exercise.

"Our aim will be to expose novice ATers to a variety of adventurous activities, after minimal training, in order for them to experience AT for themselves.

"Bavaria makes our job easy – the scenery, weather, hotel staff and activities, all within easy reach, offering



a challenging but rewarding time.

"The feedback in the past has been fantastic, with the only criticism being that the days have gone too quickly."

Get more details from local PT staff.

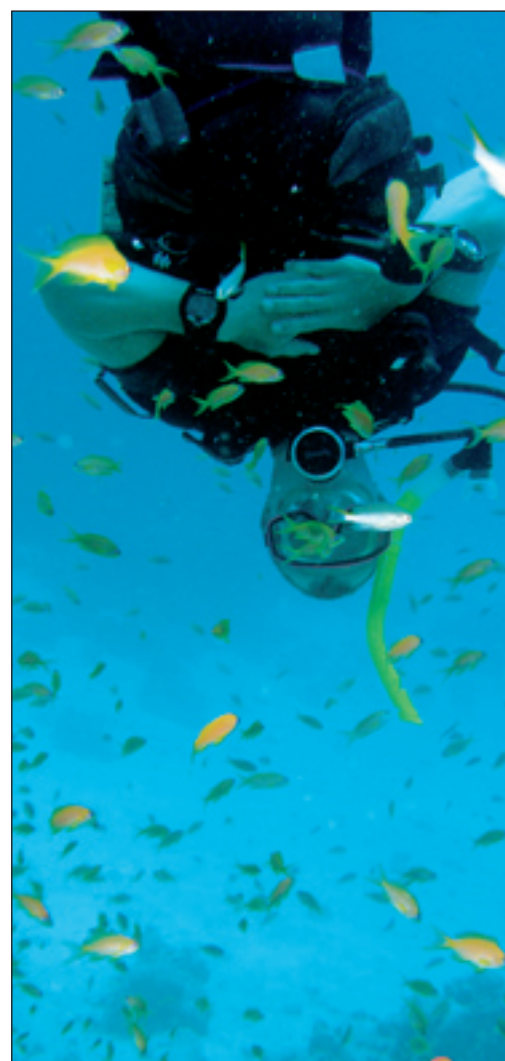
The Navy is also able to provide support and funding to those wishing to organise or participate in expeditions such as kayaking in Antarctica, diving at Ascension Island and mountaineering in Kyrgyzstan, all of which happened in 2007.

Planning is key, and expeditions are already being planned three years in advance.

Personnel have to be proactive in discovering which expeditions they can become involved with.

Service personnel wishing to organise their own expedition should contact their local PTI, and further details can be found at www.army.mod.uk/atg/_at_centres/royal_navy/pubs_and_forms.htm

AT not only offers fantastic opportunities for development and for new experiences, it is also a right for all those in the Service. Get involved and Train to Gain.



● ... or diving into a new environment ...



● ... or splashing about underground, there is likely to be an AT opportunity you can make use of



Much more than just branch development

BRANCH Development (BD) was a vital project that had a big impact on us all – but the Navy Board Personnel Change Programme (NBPCP) is, and always was, much more than just BD.

NBPCP is a collection of 15 personnel projects being managed under the full glare of the Navy Board.

This level of scrutiny indicates that these are the most important personnel projects which affect all of us in some way.

NBPCP projects strive to make sure that the RN does not stagnate and become an out-of-date military force.

Updates on existing projects:

📌 **Branch Development:** Warfare BD, Engineering BD, Logistics BD, E(TM) BD and Royal Marines BD have all pretty well become normal business now, and have or will be dropping off the NBPCP.

📌 **CW Review:** NBPCP's CW Review Project is now completed, awaiting endorsement.

Its aim was to make the application for CW candidature as straightforward as an application from outside the Navy.

📌 **Reserves Integration:** Since 1994, when it lost its MCMVs, the RNR has been configured, principally, to deliver specialist skills either not required full-time or involve personnel structures that are not large enough to merit a Regular Service cadre.

To varying degrees, all of these skills were mobilised for Operation Telic in January 2003.

Since then, some 30 per cent of the RNR and 70 per cent of the RMR Trained Strengths have undertaken operational service in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Balkans and Sierra Leone.

Relatively significant numbers of these small Volunteer Reserve services are constantly on operations. The RMR is embedded seamlessly within Regular Commando units on operations and technically indistinguishable.

The RNR, with many 'niche' specialisations, is in the formal process of integrating more closely with the RN to deliver core skills as well as those niche capabilities in a wider range of augmentation roles alongside regulars.

Examples of future projects:

📌 **Integrated Recruitment and Retention:** The manning imbalance or 'Black Hole' caused by a pause in recruiting in the mid-1990s is still with us, although we are increasingly confident that within the next few years we will be within a few per cent of the number of people we need.

There are, however, some branches which have significant shortages, made worse by higher than desirable PVR rates, or Voluntary Outflow, creating a retention gap. To tackle this, 2SL has decided to develop and implement an Integrated Recruitment and Retention strategy.

📌 **Project Fisher:** If you read last month's *Navy News* then you already know all about this.

The project team is looking at radical ways to improve the manning of the Fleet, and their work will produce several workstrands for NBPCP to take forward as individual projects.



Quartet prove their mettle

FOUR cadets from the Colchester unit, TS Colne Light, based at the Hythe in Colchester have recently been awarded their Duke of Edinburgh Awards.

Leading Cadets Joe and Sam Brazier (15) and Able Cadet Glenn Arrowsmith (14) received their Bronze Award, while Leading Cadet Josh Syrett (15) received his Silver Award.

Commenting on the awards, Commanding Officer Lt Bill Rock said that "this was a significant achievement by the cadets, showing commitment and effort to complete the necessary activities for each level of the award."

"It is also the first time in its history the unit has had four cadets gaining Duke of Edinburgh Awards."

As part of the award scheme the cadets had to undertake two expeditions, a practice run and then the qualifying event.

Joe and Sam completed theirs on foot, whereas Glenn and Josh undertook sailing expeditions, using keelboats from the Sea Cadets London Area Offshore Group TS Rebel, based at Walton-on-the-Naze.

The bronze expedition lasted for two days and one night, the silver for three days and two nights, during which time the cadets, as part of a team, had to navigate their own route and cook for themselves.

Colchester unit is based on board the former Trinity House Light Vessel No 16.

Mess dinner at Illustrious

THE second annual Mess Dinner for TS Illustrious – Walton and District unit – was held at the Harbour Lights restaurant in Titchmarsh Marina.

Almost half the 84 who attended were cadets, and among the remainder were five members of the ship's company of aircraft carrier HMS Illustrious.

Guest of Honour was Caroline Haynes, Principal of Tendring Technical College.

Grace was said by the Rev Colin Noyce, the unit chaplain, and after a superb meal, parents and friends were able to watch as various presentations and awards were made to cadets, ranging from Duke of Edinburgh Awards to a berth on board TS Royalist.



A MEMBER of staff at the City of Salford unit is making a name for himself in the world of publishing.

PO (SCC) Antony Cummins is an illustrator and artist, and has just had his first work as an illustrator published.

The book, on family history, was published last November and is available at www.pqpublishing.com

Examples of Antony's work, two of which are illustrated here, can be seen at www.acmed-art.co.uk

Antony (29) has a Masters degree in archaeology.



● Lifeboat crew members from the Weymouth boat were given a day's training on recovering small sailing craft and windsurfers by the Afloat staff of Weymouth Sea Cadet Training Centre. The lifeboat crew were briefed on the rigging of various dinghies, from simple Toppers to high-performance RS200s. The day was arranged by Chief Instructor Lt Shuttleworth, assisted by Lt John Mills, PO John Robertson, PO Elgar and PO Matt Keates, because only three of the lifeboat crew had any knowledge of dinghies and the problems that may attend them – and one of them was Matt Keates. Lifeboat Coxswain Andy Sargent thanked the staff for giving up their time to train the crew

Lochaber unit visits Faslane

CADETS from the West Coast of Scotland reaped the reward of their hard work when they paid a visit to Clyde Naval Base.

Last spring the cadets, from the Lochaber and Oban units, pulled a warship a mile along the Caledonian Canal to raise funds for their units and for Water Aid, the ship's chosen charity.

It might only have been Archer-class patrol boat HMS Smiter, but it still took a big effort – and as a result the cadets were dealing with

cheques totalling nearly £1,000 by the time the cash had all rolled in.

In return, the cadets and instructors were treated to a VIP day out at the Scottish base, starting with a high-speed tour of the facilities by water, thanks to the Royal Marines' Fleet Protection Group and their Offshore Raiding Craft.

The fact that the weather was horrible – torrential rain and low visibility – meant that getting wet on the water was not a problem, and a bedraggled Cdt Rebecca Hickman described the experience as "the best thing ever!"

The group also met one of the base's police dogs, then went on to take a full tour of the fire station.

There the Navy's special firefighting techniques for incidents on board ship were described, after which the visitors looked behind the scenes and were given a ride in the appliances.

"Everyone has made us so welcome here," said Derrick Warner, Commanding Officer of the Lochaber unit.

"We have all had a fantastic day, despite the weather."

"We hoped that we would raise some money for good causes back in the spring, but we did even better than we thought we would."

"We would like to thank everyone who donated the money, and we would also like to say a huge 'thank you' to Lt Kate Doran and everyone on board Smiter."

"Not only did we do some good for a community far away, but we have also made a whole lot of new friends."

John Fotheringham, chairman of the Lochaber unit, said: "It is always a struggle for a remote Sea Cadet unit such as TS St Christopher to raise sufficient funding each year to pay necessary expenditure, yet this significant contribution to Water Aid shows that our cadets are keen to support those less fortunate than themselves"

Katie Spooner, of Water Aid, described the fund-raising effort as "a fantastic achievement", adding that the donation will make a real difference to some of the poorest people in the world.

Ocean welcomes affiliates

A VISIT to the air assault ship HMS Ocean was one of the highlights of a week spent with the Royal Navy by a group of cadets from Hove, St Austell and Merton.

All three units are officially affiliated to the helicopter carrier, which is currently alongside at its home base of Devonport.

During an extensive programme organised by the ship, the group of 19 youngsters also visited the Fleet Air Arm Museum at RNAS Yeovilton.

Throughout the week the cadets were based at the National Sea Cadet Training Centre at HMS Raleigh, where they were able to make use of the Torpoint establishment's extensive training facilities.

As well as tackling the assault course and parade training, the cadets were given the chance to learn some basic firefighting skills.

They were also given a tour of the Royal Navy Submarine School.

Members of HMS Ocean's ship's company accompanied the youngsters throughout their time

with the Senior Service in the South West.

For most of the cadets it was their first visit to the ship that claims to be the largest in the Fleet, and many were surprised by the size of the carrier.

Timothy Peterson, of Merton unit, said: "The visit to Ocean was definitely among the highlights."

"The atmosphere of being on a warship was great."

"I have an ambition to be a warfare officer in the Royal Navy, and I could see myself serving on board a ship like Ocean in years to come."

The visit culminated in an inspection by the Executive Officer of the carrier, Cdr David Salisbury, himself a former Sea Cadet.

"I am very glad to initially get a chance to meet some of the Sea Cadets and, as a ship, we are delighted that we have been able to continue our affiliations during our docking period," said Cdr Salisbury.

"I was impressed with the keenness of the cadets during their acquaint, and particularly by the effort that had been put into getting ready for the inspection."

Tigers roar into finals

THE senior girls football team of the Leicester unit proved unbeatable at the Eastern Area five-a-side competition at St Ives in Cambridgeshire.

The TS Tiger squad – LC Ruth Rollings (team captain), LC Lindsey Fitzpatrick, Cdt Sam Clayton, Cdt Jodie Randall, New Entry Ferys Warren and New Entry Jazmyne Crewe – won all their games in the heats, conceding just a single goal.

The defence finally gave way in the semi-final, when Lowestoft and Norwich took the lead.

But the Tigers swept back with two goals of their own to win.

The only downside was an injury to LC Lindsey Fitzpatrick, who dislocated her thumb and finished the tournament with her arm in a sling.

The other finalists, Hull and Filey, had been beaten by Leicester in the heats, and the Leicester girls went up a gear to win 5-1 and book themselves a place in the national finals, to be held next month at HMS Collingwood.

Coach PO (SCC) Allan Stoneman said he was proud of the squad – and said they would benefit from training on a five-a-side pitch.

"If anyone could offer any assistance in coaching or providing a training pitch we would be extremely grateful," he said.



● Students from Elizabeth College with 815 Naval Air Squadron at RNAS Yeovilton

Island contingent visits Lynx team

A GROUP of 21 cadets from the Naval section of a Guernsey school's Combined Cadet Force (CCF) visited 815 Naval Air Squadron as part of a long-standing relationship between the two organisations.

Cadets from Elizabeth College staged their annual autumn camp in the UK, giving the youngsters the opportunity to see an operational Naval squadron.

For a lucky few, that meant the chance to fly in one of the squadron's Lynx helicopters.

Organised by Lt Jerry Tribe, the day included briefings on the squadron and a look around an aircraft in the hangar.

Meanwhile, six of the students were sent to Merryfield airfield, a satellite to RNAS Heron at Yeovilton, to conduct a winching exercise.

It had been intended to give all the students a familiarisation flight but poor weather meant the arrangement had to be changed at short notice.

The day culminated in a visit to the Fleet Air Arm Museum, which is on the site of the Yeovilton air base.

Home in on the Ranger

CADETS from the Newhaven and Seaford unit joined colleagues from Hastings on board Archer-class patrol boat HMS Ranger when she called in at Newhaven.

Ranger had been in the town for the Remembrance weekend, and a large detachment from the Brighton and Sussex Universities RN Unit (URNU) marched in the procession from St Michael's Church to the War Memorial on Remembrance Day itself.



● Lt Cdr Keith Peachey

Keith clocks up 60 years service

WITH just a short break when called up for National Service, Lt Cdr (SCC) Keith Peachey RNR has been involved in the Sea cadet Corps for 60 years.

Keith originally joined the Slough unit as a cadet at the age of 12, rising to reach the rank of Petty Officer by 1953.

Later that year he became an adult member of staff, and in 1955 was rated Chief Petty Officer.

After serving four years National Service in the Royal Marines, Keith returned to Slough having been appointed Sub Lieutenant.

Later he was appointed Assistant District Officer for Berkshire, and in 1968 was appointed District Officer for West Sussex.

In 1969 the then Lieutenant was awarded his half ring, and took over as District Officer for Hampshire and Central Districts.

Keith and his family moved to Pembrokeshire in 1974 and was appointed District Officer for West Wales, serving in that position until 1986.

Later that year Keith became Commanding Officer of Tenby unit, which at the time was going through a bad patch.

He brought many new ideas to the unit, increasing cadet numbers and watching as the unit gained many awards at canoeing and swimming, some at national level.

In 1993 Keith took over Pembroke Dock unit and helped it go from strength to strength.

At the age of 63 Keith retired from the uniformed side of the organisation and returned to Tenby to become Chair of the unit management committee.

Keith has worked tirelessly since, raising funds, supporting the unit and ensuring the cadets are trained in the correct manner in conjunction with the present CO.

The Corps is grateful to Lt Cdr Peachey for his dedication to the organisation, and especially for all he has done for West Wales.



● Sea Cadets on duty at the launch of *Diamond*, the third of the D-class destroyers to be built by BAE Systems on the Clyde. For more pictures and a report of the launch, see page 8

Picture: PO(Phot) Tam McDonald, FRPU North

Folkestone HQ is formally opened

THE new headquarters of the Folkestone and Hythe unit has been officially opened.

Situated at Ross Mews on the Shorncliffe estate in Folkestone, the new HQ was visited by Admiral the Lord Boyce, former First Sea Lord and Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports.

The admiral, representing the Queen, inspected the parade of cadets and adult staff, and unveiled a special plaque to commemorate the occasion.

The ceremonies were watched by a number of special guests representing local authorities, businesses and charities.

The unit, which was formerly situated in Sandgate, almost closed down eight years ago when the building they occupied at the time started to deteriorate and became unsuitable for cadet activities.

It was decided by the unit committee and the Commanding Officer to launch an ambitious plan to relocate.

After eight years of negotiations and financial planning, the dream became reality when the unit took possession of their new HQ building.

Originally the Channel Tunnel archive stores, the empty building needed to be redesigned, with the help of local businesses and sponsors.

Lord Boyce made special mention of the project team, consisting of unit president Col Peter Bishop (Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Kent), Dr Heather Richardson (unit chairwoman), John Barber (unit secretary), Lt Andy Orfila RNR (former Commanding Officer) and C/Sgt Al Kelly (Officer Commanding the Marine Cadets).

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He also congratulated the unit on its achievements, and spoke of the dedication of the uniformed staff and the unit management committee.

"As a senior Naval officer I know that the Admiralty value the Sea Cadet Corps as the public face of the Royal Navy," said Admiral Boyce.

"Folkestone unit has shown that it is a worthy representative of the traditions and high standards expected of the Senior Service."

During the ceremony Admiral Boyce presented the Cadet Forces to Lt Andy Orfila and C/Sgt Al Kelly.

The pair joined the Corps as cadets on the same night in 1976, and went on to become adult instructors with the Corps.

Mick wins recognition

THE Officer in Charge of the Redcar unit has won a community award.

S/Lt (SCC) Mick Williams RNR won the Evening Gazette Media Group Children's Community Champion award, sponsored by energy company npower.

Despite having a full-time job and his voluntary chairmanship of Ings Farm School, S/Lt Williams and a small team of enthusiasts re-opened the redcar unit in November 2005.

Mick and the team have been tireless in trying to get the unit afloat – and it now has 14 sailing dinghies, access to two staff-owned boats, their own safety RIB and responsibility for an MOD ASC.

Unit management committee chairman Alan Gardner, who nominated Mick, said: "It is in understanding the needs of the young people and motivating other volunteers and instructors that Mick really excels."

Mick joined Guisborough in 2004, resurrecting Redcar the following year.

Scout troop pay visit to Chid

HUNT-class mine warfare ship HMS Chiddingfold has hosted a visit by her affiliated scout troop while alongside in Portsmouth.

The 1st Chiddingfold Scouts visited the mine countermeasures vessel while she was undergoing a programmed maintenance period.

Navigating Officer Lt Simon Shaw and Gunnery Officer Lt Andy Johnson acted as hosts while the scouts were on board, and split them into three groups to see various aspects of life in a small ship.

Some got to grips with the 30mm cannon on the fo'c'sle, or had a close-up look at the General Purpose Machine Gun while using night-vision goggles.

ET Simon 'Crash' Evans led a firefighting and damage control demonstration, getting the Scouts to dress up in Fearnought firefighting suits and immersion suits designed to be used when tackling floods.

LSWingate talked to the visitors about the ship's Type 2193 sonar and Seafox underwater vehicle.

Not to be outdone, Diver Jamie Rushton showed them the ship's diving team equipment and explained how it was used.

Lt Shaw finished off with a quick tour of the bridge before the scouts enjoyed a snack and drink in the wardroom.

"The scouts eagerly enjoyed dressing up in firefighting gear and the scout leaders were impressed at the hands-on nature of the visit," said Lt Shaw.

"Each scout went away with a smile on their face, still talking about what a great time they had. "I and the Gunnery Officer were worn out, but it was worth it for the scouts' enjoyment."

The end of the evening saw the scouts conduct an investiture for new members of their troop in the Foxhole.

Lt Cdr Tom Tredray, the Commanding Officer of Chiddingfold, presented the new scouts with their neckerchiefs and welcomed them into the troop, while their new colleagues saluted – along with Chid's duty watch.

The warship is preparing to deploy to the Middle East later this year as part of a task group led by HMS Illustrious.

A good year for Hinckley

HINCKLEY unit have held their presentation and Christmas party, at which awards were presented to winning cadets by the Deputy Mayor of Hinckley and Bosworth, Cllr Jeff Bannister, and the president of the unit, Maureen Horton.

More than 100 families and friends attended, and heard of the unit's successes over the past year – including a grand total of 141 qualifications and an average of more than 50 hours afloat per cadet.

Hot-shots capture the spirit of the Corps



HOT-SHOTS in the Corps have been presented with their prizes – but this competition has nothing to do with skill at arms.

The gongs were handed out to the successful entrants in the Photographic Challenge, sponsored by the Naval Photograph Club.

The President's Trophy for the best photograph by an adult went to Lt Cdr (SCC) Robert Maynard RNR, of Flitwick and Ampthill unit, who took the shot of dinghies in front of Fearless and Intrepid.

The Antony Preston Memorial Trophy for the best photo of a ship was won by Junior Cadet Heidi Pearce, of Westerham unit, for the picture of an aircraft carrier.

And the Tod Trophy for the best photo of any Sea Cadet activity was won by AC Ryan Green, of Ross-on-Wye unit.

Trophies were presented at the reception after the Trafalgar Day Parade in London.

So now it is time to start thinking about next year's competition.

If you're a member of the Corps, start setting aside your best snaps now.



● Lt Cdr Maynard's shot of dinghies in front of Fearless and Intrepid (above); Junior Cadet Heidi Pearce's picture of an aircraft carrier (left); AC Ryan Green's candid photograph of a cadet (far left)



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● **Sevens heaven...** The Navy Sharks celebrate their victory in Dubai

23 + 7 = victory

AFTER waiting 20 years the Navy U23 XV finally regained the Inter-Services rugby title at a wet and windy RAF Halton.

The championship started in November with the RN hosting tournament favourites the Army, at Burnaby Road, *writes Lt Cdr Geraint Ashton-Jones, RNRU Director of Rugby.*

The Navy, conceding at least a stone a man in the forwards, struggled all afternoon to secure a solid platform at the scrummage and lineout.

Head coach Lt Doc Cox (AFSouth) anticipated this, however, and was pleased to see that his plan of playing two ball-winning flankers created havoc and repeatedly thwarted the Army's attacks.

Time and time again the men in red were ruthlessly cut down by double tackling and superior groundwork.

With the ball being turned over regularly, the astute tactical play of RN skipper and fly half 'Cowboy' Wayne John (HMS Bulwark) ensured that the Army's mammoth pack repeatedly had to turn and track backwards.

The work rate of the whole Navy team never waned and if the odd tackle was missed there was always a man in blue ready to make amends.

With a clear focus on their game plan the RN pack gradually wore down their more fancied opponents with the front five doing an immense amount of work to ensure that AET Malherbe (HMS Sultan) and Mne Wells (42 Cdo RM) could continue their relentless hunt for any ball carrier in a red shirt.

Although a couple of try scoring opportunities went begging the Navy richly deserved their 9-3 lead going in to the last ten minutes through three penalty goals by AB Wayne Dugan (HMS Lancaster).

The soldiers now threw caution to the wind; the RN had to withstand wave after wave of Army attacks in the last minutes of the game.

With the former and current Navy Rugby

Presidents, Admiral Sir Jonathon Band and Rear Admiral Neil Morisetti, both firmly on the edge of their seats, the 15 men in Navy blue stood firm to the proud traditions of the Senior Service and ensured that their line was not breached and a deserved victory secured.

With the Navy having the middle week of the competition free, the focus would normally have shifted to the Army hosting the RAF.

But for 'Cowboy' John and fellow team member AB Luke Dando (HMS Northumberland) it was time to pack bags and join head coach CPOPT Billy May (HMS Collingwood) and Navy Sharks captain, Mne Rob Lloyd (42 Cdo RM) under the guidance of WO1 Don Shaw (Fleet HQ) in Dubai for the International 7s.

Clearly the work ethic of the U23s was infectious as over three days the Sharks repeatedly defeated opponents through the intensity of their play mixed with unforgiving tackling and when needed rapier finishing.

The reward was a repeat of the 2005 final between the Navy Sharks and the Pyrenees 7s from south-west France.

The Sharks' vintage was clearly a very good year as they never allowed the Pyrenees side into the game and after twenty gruelling minutes were worthy winners 29-17.

Though Chef Drauninui (CTC RM) scored a hat trick of tries in the final, he was pipped by one try; with ten tries Mne Callum McCrae (Cdo Logs RM) was top Navy scorer over the tournament.

Whilst the Sharks were lifting the trophy in Dubai, U23 coaches Cox and Salmon were plotting the downfall of the RAF after watching their narrow defeat, 18-12, away to the Army.

A week later under blackened skies, a strong gusty wind and heavy rain showers 'Cowboy' John led his side out with one aim: to regain that elusive trophy.

With the difficult conditions it was not going to be a day for pretty rugby but again the Navy proved they had the game plan to match.

A reshuffled pack had replaced pace with

brawn and from the outset the selection proved the right one.

Although the first half was won by the RAF, 6-0, through two penalty goals, they had played with the wind and already there were signs of what was to come.

On a number of occasions the Navy pack had unceremoniously shunted the Air Force off the ball and the direct running of AET Taylor (848 NAS) had repeatedly caused problems.

The first fifteen minutes of the second half was met by the full force of a Naval broadside.

The pack worked up a head of steam and provided scrum half Mne Stephens (42 Cdo RM) with quality ball with which to tease the Air Force with his sniping runs.

It was therefore no surprise when RN right wing Mne Aaron Humphries (45 Cdo RM) skipped past the RAF fullback to squeeze in the corner for the Navy's opening score.

It was fitting that the second and decisive score was through a rolling maul. The pack thoroughly deserved their reward and although it was S/Lt Dale Smith (BRNC) who claimed the try, it in truth belonged to the whole pack.

With the conversion missed, the RN needed to defend their 10-6 lead and though the RAF kept trying to unlock the Navy's defence the team stuck together as they had all season with a work rate and tenacity that demonstrated how strong their team spirit was.

When referee Steve Penfold finally blew the whistle, the 20-year wait was over and the Navy U23s could at long last celebrate regaining the Inter-Service Trophy – the second title for RN Rugby within the week.

The final words must go to victorious captain 'Cowboy' John. When interviewed after the game, he paid special tribute to AB Kev Macrossan (HMS Argyll) who would have been part of the team but was currently deployed in the Gulf.

He also thanked all the mess mates of the squad who had covered duties over the last few months which had helped the team to prepare and had therefore contributed to the success.

Missed chances cost footballers

RN Ladies 0 Plymouth Argyle Ladies 4

The RN Ladies learned some valuable lessons during their annual visit to Plymouth to face the challenge of Argyle Ladies.

With the RN squad down in numbers, a chance was taken to bring in three trainees from HMS Raleigh. Argyle fielded a strong squad including ex-West Ham player, Aiofe Ahern.

On a heavy, wet pitch, the opening ten minutes saw both teams coming to terms with the conditions.

The only goal in the first period came after a loose pass was intercepted in the middle of the park, and an Argyle midfielder fired in a good shot from just outside the area.

The RN were nevertheless defending well, with CPO Dryhurst and POPT Farthing starting to forge a good partnership at the heart of the Navy defence.

In the second period, Argyle's attacks down the right finally paid off with a cross driven in from the edge of the area.

The Navy replied with their best spell of the match, with the midfield passing the ball around and creating chances.

Rebecca Brown had a good shot saved from Nat Bavister's cross and then a Marissa Dryhurst header from a Navy corner forced the Argyle keeper into another stop.

Just after the hour mark, Argyle got their third goal after a scramble in the penalty area.

Both sides then made a couple of changes, with the heavy conditions starting to affect a few of the players.

The changes disrupted the pattern of the game, and with the match winding down, Argyle's No.9 was not closed down on the edge of the area and she was allowed to turn and fire in a shot from the edge of the area.

The final score, 0-4 to Argyle, was disappointing and slightly flattered the opposition.

RN Seniors 2 RAF 2

With only 13 players to select from due to injuries and non-availabilities, the RN were lacking in self-belief and played poorly in the first half of this South West Counties Cup match on a waterlogged pitch at RAF Uxbridge.

At 2-0 down, a heavy defeat looked on the cards but our second half performance was a revelation.

By the end of the match the RN had pulled back through a penalty from Mne Dan Boere after 66 minutes and, three minutes later, an equaliser from skipper POPT Ritchie Way.

The two other RN players who caught the eye in this battling comeback were Mne Gaz McGonnell and WEA Jamie Ritchie, playing on his debut.

RN Seniors 2 Devon 1

This was a cracking game on HMS Drake's No.1 pitch and, despite an experimental defence due to injuries to key players, the RN team was exceptional and thoroughly deserved their victory.

C/Sgt Ritchie Hope got us off to a great start when he rounded the keeper to score after 16 minutes, but Devon's centre forward scored a wondrous 'turn and lob' from outside the box only six minutes later.

Despite a disputed disallowed RN goal, our team always looked the better side and it was no surprise when Cpl Simon Bochenski put us back in front early in the second half.

Unfortunately for the visitors, the Devon keeper's throw rebounded off the back of an advancing defender; Si will never have an easier goal.

The score does not reflect the dominance of the RN Team, particularly in the last 20 minutes when they created several chances to score.

RN U21s 0 Civil Service 2

The U21s played their second friendly of the season against a strong Civil Service side, the RN side started slowly and were struggling to get a foothold in the game, although our keeper was rarely tested due to the resolute defending of WEA Ritchie (Collingwood) and MEM Davidson (Lancaster).

Mne Pinkawa who was making his first competitive start at left back and AEM Breasley (Sultan), were containing the threat from the wide areas.

A scoreless first half had pleased the management team of WO1 Steve Rule and Lt John Gordon and the RN started the second period where they left off.

NA Tilsley (Heron) headed over from a corner, but on 58 mins disaster struck when a mix-up in the RN defence culminated in a long ball into our area hitting MEM Davidson on the back of his legs and falling to a Civil Service player in the middle of an unmarked goal. He duly dispatched it into the net.

If that wasn't bad enough, 50 seconds later whilst the RN side were still cursing their bad luck, the CS scored a second.

To the Royal Navy's credit that shook them into life, firstly from an AB Thompson (York) free kick, AET Brookes smashed the ball home only to be ruled out for offside.

RN U18s 0 Kent 1

The U18s were hosted by Kent County FA at the Dartford Stadium, home of Dartford FC, for their second fixture of the season.

After two training days together, where all 22 squad members showed real commitment, the management team of CPOPTs Fraser Quirke (Excellent) and Paul Willetts (Sultan) were able to select a team capable of giving a good game to a strong Kent team.

With home advantage and a technically-able team, the opposition started brightly and applied a great deal of pressure to the young sailors, however a strong pairing of AET Watson (Sultan) and ETME Stark (Sultan) in the centre of the RN's defence kept them out and protected AET Milliken (Heron) in goal.

As the sailors settled, they started to get a foothold in the game and could have easily gone in at the interval one up after some swift counter attacking by ET(ME) Stockton (Sultan) and AB Bayne (Collingwood).

The second half brought a change of formation and some subs for the RN who continued to cause problems for Kent, with Mne Morgan (42 Cdo) coming close.

But just when the RN looked like they may get something from the game the referee awarded a dubious penalty to Kent which was converted.

The Navy came back with some good chances, but no goals to their name.

There was no shame in losing so narrowly to such strong opposition and there were lots of positives to take from the game.

Dates for the 2008 Coach Education programme have now been confirmed. Courses can be viewed and booked directly from our website or by contacting Steve Johnson 02392 723974 for an application form.

As always, more details on all RNFA business can be found at www.royalnavyfa.com.

Veterans' joy

THE RN women lifted the veterans' Inter-Service Tennis title for the third successive year on the hallowed ground of Wimbledon.

The team, led by Trish Cunison, comprised Jenny Lloyd, Liz Newell, Nickii Hudson, Maggie Cole, Nicky Spurgeon, Anne Saunders and Sally Hazell.

They were presented their trophy by Vice Admiral Tim Laurence, president of the CS Lawn Tennis Association.

Hockey triumph

Continued from back page in the Navy goal, and much credit goes to CPOAEA Susie Bythell (MASU) for holding the Navy's midfield together.

The sole goal came from boxing champ Lt Lucy Abel (HMS Sultan) who thrashed a fizzing switched left short corner high into the roof of the RAF two minutes from time.

Fourth time lucky for Royals

THERE was a reduced turn-out at the Inter-Command Squash Championships at HMS Heron, with just four teams contesting the men's competition and no ladies' event as the West could only field one player.

The event nevertheless included the majority of the RN's top players distributed between the Commands.

On paper it was Naval Air Command and the Royal Marines who appeared to have the strongest squads.

Portsmouth included Lt Matt Ellicott (Westminster), the RM fielded the current RN champion, Capt Damien May RM (771 NAS), NAC boasted PO Neil Martin and Lt Julian Crew (815 NAS) and Plymouth had POPT Jason Wallace (Albion) and LPT Simon Backhouse (Cumberland) to bolster their chances, plus the RNSRA President, Admiral the Lord Boyce, in their ranks.

There was some very good

squash played throughout the competition and the early matches all went according to expectations.

The Royals made short work of Portsmouth and Plymouth, despite a five-setter between May and Ellicott that just went the former's way, and NAC dominated matches against Portsmouth and Plymouth too.

What was to become a third place play-off between Portsmouth and Plymouth went to Pompey, the admiral being the only winner in a 1-4 defeat for Plymouth, setting up a final match of the competition between the two pre-tournament favourites.

Martin won his match as the NAC No.2 as did Lt Cdr Ben Lewis, NAC No.3, but wins for the Royals at four and five, set up a mouthwatering final match between May and Crew at No.1.

The script could not have been written better as May comfortably won the first two games only to see

Crew fight back most determinedly to level at two all after four very good games.

So, two matches all, two games all, in the final match – all dead level, with everything to play for.

Spectators were riveted to the match, which seemed to last an eternity, however it was May that came out the winner eventually 9-7 to take the match and the championship for the Royals – a win which ended their sequence of three years as runners-up.

Admiral the Lord Boyce presented the Robin Bawtree trophy to the captain of the RM team, Sgt 'Westy' West (Excellent), and medals to the winners and runners up, NAC.

Cdr Martin Jukes RN (Chairman NAC Squash) thanked Cdre Chris Palmer (Cdre HMS Heron) and Lt Sarah Pearce RN (PT & RO) for use of the facilities and LPT 'Shiner' Wright for his efforts to make the event so successful.



Onside with Capt Paul Cunningham, RNFA

Next month



KAAOT theory – life on Iraq's oil platforms



BRF encounter – Royals train Stateside with the US Marines



Bootie camp – Royals train Jack for life on the ground

And

Save our souls – maintaining morale during nine months at sea



● Flower power... a surfer rides a decorative board during the RN/RM championships
Picture: LA(Phot) Gaz Faulkner, 42 Cdo



Wave rulers

Hockey stars' inside edge

IN THE 99th season of Navy hockey, Royal Navy teams had a lot (well, almost everything) to celebrate after two days of Inter-Services indoor competition at Aldershot.

The contest opened with the Fleet Air Arm men – runners-up in the RN Inter-Command championships – going one better in the IS Inter-Command Tournament (ISICT).

And it just got better and better, writes Lt Cdr Alan Walker, secretary RNHA.

For there were also trophies for the U23 and senior men; the ladies faced a near-impossible task against a potent Army side, but triumphed over the RAF.

Naval Air Command's victory in the ISICT ensured an appearance for the sixth successive year in the West of England finals.

The Royal Marines came a creditable third.

Men on fire were LAEA Mark Stanton with 11 goals – three hat-tricks in four games for NAC – and Mne Tom Nicoll with ten; he also bagged three hat-tricks over four appearances.

On the second day of the tournament, three of the RN's five representative teams turned in outstanding performances.

The senior men first faced the RAF, eager for revenge after defeat in their previous encounter with the dark blues.

This was a pulsating match, marred only by some odd umpiring decisions which baffled both sides, as well as the sizeable crowd.

Three times, the Senior Service enjoyed a two-goal lead over the airmen – and three times the RAF pegged them back.

With the score tied at six apiece and barely four minutes left, the RAF seemed to be in the ascendancy.

Step up RN skipper Mne Jim Tyler (UKLFCSG) to strike a

shot at the RAF keeper with 72 seconds on the clock.

He blocked the strike, but Stanton knocked the rebound into the roof of the net to grab his second hat-trick of the encounter – and seize a narrow RN victory.

The clash with the Army was another ding-dong do.

The soldiers boasted two internationals in their line-up.

They didn't, however, have an antidote to the free-scoring Stanton who was yet again on fire.

He accounted for three of the six goals banged in, the last of them two minutes and 20 seconds from the end to clinch a 6-5 victory – and the overall title.

The U23 squad entered their tournament quietly confident, taking to the 'pitch' with one of the strongest sides fielded in years.

Put to the sword first were the RAF, who found themselves 4-0 down by half time.

The airmen rallied somewhat in the second period, but they had no answer to the free-scoring sailors and marines, who ran out 9-4 winners.

The Army proved stiffer opposition and, since they'd been beaten by the RAF, a draw with the RN would ensure a Senior Service overall victory.

This wasn't a drab 0-0 draw. This was an end-to-end 6-6 draw with the lead regularly changing hands. It took a 36th-minute penalty, coolly slotted away by skipper Mne Tom Nicoll, to level the scores and ensure the RN were tournament winners for the sixth time in eight years.

The icing on the cake was second place for the RN senior



● In step... the RN senior men – plus a youthful supporter – pose before their triumph in the Inter-Services Indoor Tournament

women – admittedly not victory, but second is most definitely better than third.

The superb Army team, full of international experience, demolished both the RAF and RN (11-0 and 10-1 respectively).

So it was left to the dark and light blues to fight for second.

The resulting match was a low-scoring thriller.

The Navy ground out a 1-0 win over 40 thrilling minutes with both sides foiling 30 or more attempts on one another's goals.

PO(MEA) Lisa McMahon (Westminster) was magnificent

Continued on page 55

THE RAF are probably still smarting... but who cares?

THE RN and RM Boardriders were crowned champions at the Inter-Service Surfing Championships.

Penhale Sands in Cornwall was the setting for three days of surf action, staged in seas with an unexpected 3-4ft glassy swell.

There was a fantastic performance from the longboard team, taking advantage of some lengthy rides to gain valuable points.

As the swell increased, the shortboard team held their own, carving the clean faces and finding some peeling lefts and rights.

The bodyboard team also made a valiant effort as the tide receded, making for some steep faces and big drops.

When judges tallied the scores, the RN and RM were joint first with the RAF with the Army two points behind.

The team with the most first places over the weekend's surfing were deemed to be the winners – and the RN/RM's six triumphs just beat the RAF's five to claim the title.

Cornwall was again the venue a fortnight later as the RN championships were staged in crumbly 2-3ft swell conditions.

For the first time there was a ladies club open with three riders of the fairer sex competing fiercely. CPO Esaula Armstrong claimed the inaugural gong.

The following longboard heats saw a number of riders enduring some real pastings on the inside, with a hard paddle to get themselves back into the competition in an increasingly clean-mellow swell.

LMET James Bulpett proved to be longboard master. He was also among the front-runners in the shortboard event where there was some stylish off-the-lip action (apparently). 'Big Wave' Dave Burr was named the victor.

Then it was off to the pub... for the awards ceremony of course.

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